A COMPANION TO EARLY CINEMA

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Contents

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Acknowledgments

Introduction

Part I Early Cinema Cultures

1 The Culture Broth and the Froth of Cultures of So-called Early Cinema

2 Toward a History of Peep Practice

- The Incubation Era of Peep Media
- Peep Shows and the Culture of Attractions
- Peep Media in Private
- The Cosmorama – An Urban Peeping Institution
- Peeping in Public: From Stereoscopy to Moving Images
- Between Peep Practice and Screen Practice
- Conclusion: From Peep Media to Mediated Voyeurism

3 “We are Here and Not Here”: Late Nineteenth-CenturyStage Magic and the Roots of Cinema in the Appearance (and Disappearance) of the Virtual Image

4 The *Féerie* between Stage and Screen
- The Stage *Féerie:* Stunning Magic and Visual Splendor
- Châtelet 1896: *La biche au bois*
- Châtelet 1905: *Les 400 coups du diable*
- Conclusion

5 The Théâtrophone, an Anachronistic Hybrid Experiment or One of the First Immobile Traveler Devices?
- Between Performance and Attraction: Taking Another Look at the Théâtrophone
- From the Imagination to International Networks
- The Hybridization of the Théâtrophone as a Model for Future Applications

6 The “Silent” Arts: Modern Pantomime and the Making of an Art Cinema in Belle Époque Paris: The Case of Georges Wague and Germaine Dulac
- The Art of Running History Backwards
- The Modernization of the Arts in Belle Époque France
- The “Silent” Arts: Concepts of Wordlessness
- Pantomime and Cinema: A Shared Intermediality
- Pantomime, Cinema, and the Language of Signs: Early Abstraction
- “Classical” Pantomime and Early Cinema: From Adaptation to Integration
- Modern Pantomime: The Case of Georges Wague and Germaine Dulac

Wague on Stage: Gestural Abstraction
“Modern” Pantomime and “Pure” Cinema: A Shared “Visibilization”
Beyond Word and Phrase: An Impressionist Proposal

Part II Early Cinema Discourses

7 First Discourses on Film and the Constructionof a “Cinematic Episteme”
The Cinematic Episteme
Mechanics and the Mechanism
The Modern Mind
Epistemology and Film History

8 The Discourses of Art in Early Film, or, Why Not Rancière?
The Representative Regime: Quality Films and Historicism
The Modes of Art: National Heritage and Reform in the Quality Film
Aesthetic Regimes: Classical Cinema and the Avant-Garde
Histories of Early Cinema: Rancière and Film Historiography

9 Sensationalism and Early Cinema
Introduction
The Concept and Phenomenon of Sensationalism
Explanations of Sensationalism
Cine-sensationalism

10 From Craft to Industry: Series and Serial Production Discourses and Practices in France
- The “Craft” Era
- The Transition to Another System
- An Industrial Conception of Kinematography
- The “Industrial” Discourse Becomes Generalized
- Putting Industrial Discourse into Practice
- Scenes in Series
- Series, Serial Production, and Mode of Exhibition

11 Early American Film Publications: Film Consciousness, Self Consciousness
- The Four Language Traits of Early Film Publications
- Regions of Film Consciousness
- Regions of Self Consciousness
- Conclusion

12 Early Cinema and Film Theory
- Topical Contributions
- Conceptual Contributions
- Film Theory Finally in Crisis

Part III Early Cinema Forms

13 A Bunch of Violets

14 Modernity Stops at Nothing: The American Chase Film and the Specter of Lynching

Preamble
Scholarship
The Chase Model
Newspaper Archives
Putting Lynching in Context
Bloodhounds
Racial Merriment: Chickens, Watermelons – and Pumpkins
Unscripted Vigilantism
Conclusion

15 “The Knowledge Which Comes in Pictures”: Educational Films and Early Cinema Audiences
The Campaign to Promote Educational Films, 1910–13
Spectators and Educational Films

16 Motion Picture Color and Pathé-Frères: The Aesthetic Consequences of Industrialization
Motion Picture Color before World War I
Pathé’s Commitment to Stencil Color
Pathé’s Color Production: Some Statistics
The Realist Aesthetic
Early Stencil Color
The New Stencil Films
Kinemacolor

Part IV Early Cinema Presentations

17 The European Fairground Cinema: (Re)defining and (Re)contextualizing the “Cinema of Attractions”
The Concept “Cinema of Attractions”
Fairground Cinema
Audiences and Film Programs
A European Institution
Summary and Discussion

18 Early Film Programs: An Overture, Five Acts, and an Interlude
Overture
Act I: Novelty Era Programming
Act II: Traveling Motion Picture Shows
Act III: Variety Theater Shows
Interlude: Alternative or Non-Theatrical Programs
Act IV: Nickelodeon and Other Permanent-Venue Programs
Act V: Multiple-Reel and Feature Film Programming
Bonsoir or Good Night

19 “Half Real-Half Reel”: Alternation Format Stage-and-Screen Hybrids
Case Study: *Winchester*
From Featured Sequences to Integration

20 Advance Newspaper Publicity for the Vitascope and the Mass Address of Cinema ’ s Reading Public
Readers, Publics, Audiences

Telegraphing Cinematic Experience: The Vitascope's Advance Publicity
Cinema's Publicity Beyond the Vitascope

21 Storefront Theater Advertising and the Evolution of the American Film Poster

First Film Advertising
Show Printer Offerings
Nickelodeon Posters
Better Cinema Posters
Nickelodeon Poster Practices
Advertising Controversies
Conclusion: Toward the Classical Hollywood Cinema Poster

22 Bound by Cinematic Chains: Film and Prisons during the Early Era

Film Spectatorship in Prison: The Early Years
Cinemagoing at Sing Sing: The Emergence of Film Culture Behind Bars
Reform and the Female Prisoner: Uplift and Knowing One's Place
"An Education in Americanism": Concluding Thoughts

Part V Early Cinema Identities

23 Anonymity: Uncredited and Unknown in Early Cinema

Conclusion: Retrospective Credit

24 The Invention of Cinematic Celebrity in the United Kingdom
- Another Cinema
- A New Industry
- A Prehistory of the Picture Personality
- The Place of the United States

25 The Film Lecturer
- Introduction
- History
- Politics
- Semiology
- Conclusion

26 Richard Hoff man: A Collector ’ s Archive
- Pictures and Posters: The Airdome at Point Pleasant
- Commuting to the Movies
- In and Around Germantown
- Downtown Philly
- The Database

Part VI Early Cinema Recollections

27 Early Films in the Age of Content; or, “Cinema of Attractions” Pursued by Digital Means

28 Multiple Originals: The (Digital) Restoration and Exhibition of Early Films

The Restoration of Early Films in Light of a Theory of Film Archival Practice
Frameworks
Concepts
(Digital) Restoration of Early Films
(Digital) Exhibition of Early Films

29 Pointing Forward, Looking Back: Refl exivity and Deixis in Early Cinema and Contemporary Installations

Reflexivity of the Medium
Ride Films and Deixis of the Image
Placing Screens
Looking Forward: Archival Presence in Deictic Time

30 Is Nothing New? Turn-of-the-Century Epistemes in Film History

Epistemes 1900/2000: Nothing is New …
Pre-cinema, Para-cinema, Proto-cinema
Early Cinema: “Nitrate Can’t Wait” and the Policy of the Archive and the Festival
Revisionist Historiographies
Beginnings, Becomings, and Fateful Divisions
Against Convergence: The Cinema Does Not (Yet) Exist
Film History or Cinema History
The Cinema is Always Complete

Index

A Companion to Early Cinema

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Introduction

Nicolas Dulac, André Gaudreault, and Santiago Hidalgo

The title of this book, *A Companion to Early Cinema*, confidently asserts the existence of something called "early cinema." At this moment there are conferences in preparation, publications written, and grants being justified across the globe under the banner of this term. Compared to other areas of research within the broader field of film studies, early cinema has been the focus of growing attention since the 1980s, an impressive feat considering the short span and limited territory it was originally meant to cover within film history. Is this unflinching enthusiasm the result of a visceral fascination with origins, the exhilaration of archival discovery, the sheer nostalgic appeal of these films from another era, a higher degree of-recognition from universities, publishers, and granting institutions? A definitive answer is unlikely, being inextricably bound to all of these factors. Or we could look at the situation differently and ask ourselves if it is not "early cinema," as a concept, as an intellectual category, that nourished this enthusiasm by constantly reshaping itself and adapting to new inquiries and currents of thought, to the impulses of the discipline and the unearthing of new documents and archival materials.

In fact, one of the oddities of early cinema, which raises significant confusion for both early cinema scholars and outside observers, is that its existence partially depends on the performative act of declaring it exists. This is because whenever someone speaks about "early cinema" they are generally talking about at least two things, without necessarily acknowledging an interesting distinction between them. On the one hand, the term refers to the existence of an agreed-upon, factual reality – cinema before roughly 1914–15. The institutional function of the term corresponds with other similar terms intended to divide the field into predefined objects, periods, genres, and geographic locations for study: Silent Cinema, Postwar Cinema, Science Fiction, French Cinema, and so forth. And at the same time that it refers to this agreed-upon reality, the term has the secondary

function of designating a conceptualization of this reality, instituted over the last forty years or so, into a broad, heterogeneous research paradigm, which in fact comes to have a bearing on the parameters of the first designation. This process of conceptualization even results in seemingly counterintuitive, self-negating, questions, such as is there such a thing as "early cinema."

Although the terms "film" and "cinema" sometimes designate material objects – a type of format, movie theaters, the projection of motion pictures – there is a sense in which cinema designates a kind of representational practice which is not necessarily present during the first fifteen years of motion pictures. It is more accurate to suggest that cinema begins in earnest in the 1910s with the institutionalization of motion pictures within a defined industry that included shared aesthetics and modes of production. There is also the secondary issue that (at least in English) the term "cinema" was not yet used at the time to describe the technology, let alone its status as a cultural phenomenon.[1] Instead, a variety of other terms were used, derived either from certain film-related technologies or from motion picture effects (animated views, animated pictures, moving pictures, pictured scenes, motography, kinematography, and many more). Therefore, cinema was neither present as a term (and therefore as the concept it designates today), nor was there an institutional practice in the way cinema exists today, such that one could unproblematically assert "cinema" existed during this early period. Perhaps the most salient criticism of the use of "early cinema" is that it suggests not only a false conceptualization from the point of view of the period, but also a false sense of determinism between earlier practices (such as phantasmagoria, fairy plays, prestidigitation, etc.) and cinema, as if these inevitably converged to give rise to this new technology, which erases them as soon as it establishes itself as a "new beginning."

A similar situation exists with the precise meaning of "early," which in fact seems to respond to some of the problems raised by the application of cinema to this time frame. The end of early cinema, as mentioned, is generally accepted as falling around 1914–15, corresponding roughly with the beginning of World War I (and film's integration into war propaganda), and a more codified aesthetic in the form of narrative features (the most cited example being D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*), which came to be

known as, variously, the institutional mode of representation,[2] a system of narrative integration[3] or simply classical cinema.[4] The starting point is less clear, however, spanning roughly from 1893 to 1910, depending on the particular criteria applied: first film viewings, the first film projections, or the beginnings of institutional film. This periodization is further complicated if we see cinema as falling along an even longer continuum of moving picture cultures and screen practices that includes everything that came before the technological invention of film, sometimes defined as "pre-cinema" (itself a term that contributes to the notion that "cinema" existed in a more entrenched form at the moment the technology was invented). Indeed, many contributions to the field of early cinema, as this Companion illustrates in the first section, now focus on these earlier practices (what André Gaudreault defines as "cultural series") that predate the Kinetoscope, the Vitascope, and the Cinématographe, the traditional technologies used to mark the beginnings of cinema. Thus, even as early cinema exists as a fairly unified field of study, with its encyclopedia,[5] its international association,[6] and its mythical place of germination,[7] debates among its members about the identity of the field demand a sort of constant self-questioning and self-doubt about what it is precisely that is being studied. The outcome of this reflection could have weakened the integrity of the field or contributed to its fragmentation into various disciplines. As Tom Gunning suggests, early cinema runs the risk of losing its center of gravity and being "absorbed into the almost boundless topic of visual culture."[8] Or it simply could have turned toward scholarly cynicism, which is sometimes the case with categories that present a far-reaching interpretative framework such as genre or postmodernist criticism. It led, rather, to a collective acceptance and recognition that the paradigm is partially grounded on arbitrary agreements for the benefit of ensuring research continues and prospers in spite of the self-questioning. It is in this sense that we say "early cinema" almost functions as a "performative," to use J. L. Austin's expression.[9] Of course, it does not have the same performative character as verbal utterances that are in themselves actions (such as "I promise"), but it nonetheless *acts* in this sense in that the very term "early cinema" not only creates an operative intellectual category to which scholars can relate, but

also gives shape to a complex object of study that would otherwise remain elusive.[10]

It is from this confrontation with documents that the reconceptualization of early cinema within university institutions consolidated into an emerging field of study starting in the 1970s, namely with the celebrated Brighton Congress attended by several scholars who would come to define the field.[11] Even though an obvious disciplinary objective is to uncover and analyze new historical data, the field itself has perhaps been made noteworthy within cinema studies more broadly by the invention of new concepts which have come to determine the way film is thought about. The most influential of these concepts might be "cinema of attractions," still referenced frequently today after 25 years of circulation, as many of the chapters in this collection attest. By challenging teleological accounts that envisioned the invention of film techniques and aesthetics as oriented toward narrative from the very beginning, it managed to turn on its head decades of conventional wisdom about the way film developed. The concept also contested the premise that filmmakers and audiences shared a mutual desire for narrative and offered a persuasive alternative history that subverted this *telos*; rather than having future institutional objectives in mind, such as narrative film, filmmakers also followed rules originating in practices preceding the invention of film technologies. In addition, the public was represented as more complex in its interests and behavior than previously assumed. The cinema of attractions contributed to the shattering of two conjoined myths sharing a similar conceptualization – that early cinema and early spectators were primitive (in an evolutionary sense).[12] What became apparent in this reconceptualization – or perhaps more accurately, recontextualization of early cinema – resulting from passionate empirical research, was that film was embedded in a series of cultures from which it derived its sense, purpose, and meaning, and that the public experienced these new aesthetics as much as continuities as ruptures and shocks.

Indeed, judging from the contributions in this collection, one might say that early cinema is often spoken about, even when the importance of grounding inferences in local knowledge is acknowledged, as a sort of

culture extending across the Atlantic, its most dominant players England, France, and the United States, within which a multiplicity of vibrant communities and identities existed, each requiring a certain level of thick description to become demarcated and distinguished as meaningful and relevant in their own right. As with culture more broadly, the description of early cinema brings to bear a host of interdisciplinary approaches – sociological, anthropological, economic, philosophical, psychological – that divide the cinema world into discrete components and which, depending on the particular theory adopted, often suggest ways of organizing and describing the causes and effects. Early film historians, however, offer something more in applying these disciplines: not just a knowledge of film history, but a sort of aesthetic and formal awareness, an attention to the relationship between film, public, and context, and a willingness, perhaps, to gamble intellectually. In this way, the early film historian is not merely a historian of early film, but a particular type of versatile identity who has developed a disposition toward weaving a multitude of complementary and sometimes discordant vocabularies with the purpose of seeing early cinema under as many descriptions as there are languages. It is the sense of participating in this project of recontextualization, of seeing this as a valid enterprise and contribution within the humanities, as much as the thrill of making new empirical discoveries, which attracts scholars to the field of early cinema. The vitality of the community is derived from the dialectic tension between the archival impulse and the disposition toward recontextualization. One of the essential functions of the concept of early cinema, then, is to bring these various identities, interests, and vocabularies – which pull in every direction, sometimes making only oblique reference to that increasingly archaic object “film” (as the first section of this book exemplifies) – under a common rubric. This ensures that fruitful dialogue continues to take place among the various members, who all willingly agree to identify their concerns as related to “early cinema” even if the boundaries of the concept itself remain under constant dispute. It is in this spirit that we present the many dialogues contained within the pages of this volume.

Scope of the Volume

In line with the view that “early cinema” as a concept generally circumscribes a Western phenomenon, contributions to this volume concentrate on the development of early cinema in Europe (England, Germany, France, and Italy) and the United States, which is not to say that “cinema” did not exist elsewhere concurrently. Even within such limits, the variety of research subjects is considerable, extending into all areas of cinema life – movies, exhibition, industry, audiences, general public, publications, archiving, programming, discourse, and cultural significance. In effect, an editorial choice was made to provide a deep background understanding of early cinema within the Western tradition, rather than extend the scope to include the global development of cinema, even while recognizing the necessity of incorporating such contributions to the renewal and understanding of our field. This would have required – to constitute more than mere token references – a reconceptualization of the periodization and limits of the concept “early cinema” as it stands today. In a sense, the limit of this book echoes the limit of “early cinema” as a concept. With its chronological parameters, aesthetic forms, institutional life, and social statuses and functions, “early cinema” is deeply inscribed in the modernity, industrialization, and urbanization characteristic of Western cultures, from which it is not easily separated and reapplied as a model to other cultural contexts – at least not without the potential of superficially glossing, or worse misrepresenting and effacing other cultures under the rubric of a totalizing concept. Instead, we see the value of someday soon dedicating an entire volume strictly to global early cinema, which would perhaps imply a radical rethinking of the concept – if this ruptured current axiomatic understandings, as occurred with the cinema of attractions. Such a project would involve the discovery of other narrative forms, other publics, other concepts, and other chronological timelines from technological emergence to institutionalization.

Thus, the thirty chapters presented in this Companion reflect the multidisciplinary diversity of the field of early cinema today within the parameters of cinema’s development in the West. Contributors were encouraged to present original essays intended for both students and experts, all of which were anonymously refereed to ensure the publications met the highest standards in terms of scientific rigor and quality. We have

made every effort to give voice to both the older generation that helped establish the field, who continue to be inventive thinkers and to produce essential reading, and the new generation courageously forging ahead in an ever expanding and complex digital environment that constantly threatens to undermine the very foundations on which the field stands. Indeed, this historical intersection is worth emphasizing – it is against the backdrop of the digital world melting all that is cinema into air, of a panoply of visual forms and environments that escapes essential definition, that early cinema emerges as a terrain that resists infinite fragmentation, and which frankly recognizes the importance of some objective epistemological stakes, of the *need* for cinema, even as cinema itself is paradoxically shown to have never existed at all. Because of these various concerns and multidisciplinary approaches, categorizing early cinema articles can be quite challenging, with many defying singular descriptions as types of texts. No author, scholar, or artist likes having his or her work misidentified, least of all because, as most readers of Gérard Genette know, the way a text is eventually understood, especially in the humanities in which the value and interest of articles lie as much in the rhetoric, style, and argument as in the raw presentation of information, is partially determined by the particular context in which the article is found – the book, the section heading, the title. All of these suggest a way of interpreting and appreciating the text to some degree, invoking particular ongoing discursive frameworks that provide the argument with meaning and corresponding interlocutors. As editors, we have taken seriously the responsibility of finding appropriate companions for the chapters within this larger Companion – in the way they are brought together under a common rubric, defined not according to a series of terms (as an example, at one point we considered naming one section “theory, methods and history”), but rather by attempting to find evocative but unifying titles that are more suggestive than circumscriptive. In these divisions are proposed a way of thinking about the field of early cinema in terms of the particular issues that seem relevant and exciting today.

Part I, “Early Cinema Cultures,” concerns the activities, practices, and technologies preceding 1895 that partake in the beginnings of cinema. The story of how these “cultural series” (theater, *fairy plays*, photography, magic

lanterns) relate to cinema has been told from a number of perspectives, each identifying particular causal links, the most common early historical accounts placing emphasis on the connection between film and theater; that is, seeing the first films as adhering to theatrical aesthetics, becoming in a sense “filmed theater.” In time, so this story goes, filmmakers discovered aesthetics that were particular to film (editing, camera movement, framing, and so forth) and transformed film from a recording apparatus to an art form in its own right. While theater was certainly a fruitful and convincing way of explaining *some* early cinema aesthetics, further research complicated this narrative, while nevertheless confirming some premises. It seems reasonable to suggest, for instance, that film was initially not yet a distinct art form, either in the way it was conceptualized, or in the way it was used (that is, with film-specific conventions), in spite of some commentary at the time that alluded to film in this way, and in spite of some filmmakers discovering some essentially characteristic film aesthetics earlier than the dominant narrative about cinema’s beginnings typically accepts (such as editing). In fact, rather than inventing new aesthetics corresponding with a new technology, many early films obeyed rules characteristic of other cultural series. These were not limited to just theater, however. The more these other cultural series are studied, the more we are able to understand the relationship between the before and after, seeing film not as a radical rupture, but rather as a continuation of what was already familiar, already entrenched, in other stage, screen, and optical practices, including the way these were exhibited, programmed, used, and received. Part I thus charts some of the relationships, intersections, and continuities existing between cultural series preceding and even existing concurrently with film. These cultural series constitute cinema in significant and determining ways, ultimately receding into the background as film consolidated into a distinct medium and art form recognized as such by practitioners and commentators.

The way cinema was understood, experienced, and spoken about has indeed become a major area of interest, falling in line with the idea of early cinema as a culture that requires investigation into the mental and conceptual reality of the public and practitioners. This turn has come to refashion the historian as a quasi-ethnographer who adopts as much as

possible a relativist approach to describing phenomena. Much as ethnocentric and evolutionary approaches in anthropology have been eclipsed by cultural relativism – which calls attention to contextual features and experiences while advocating empirical observations and an attention to plurality – deterministic and teleological accounts of early cinema history have yielded close historical inquiries and a concern for the diversity of film practices. As Part II, "Early Cinema Discourses," shows, our knowledge of this "internal" reality is derived from documentation that enables historians to chart ongoing concerns, discourses, and ways of talking about film. Concurrent with the advent of cinema is the emergence of specialized publications that covered different aspects of film, some more directly than others. Its scientific interest and influence, for example, might be written about in scientific journals; connections to photography in photography journals; widespread public reception in daily newspapers. The result is that there existed a multitude of publication vehicles from which an understanding of the evolving and moving picture of cinema is revealed, made progressively accessible to modern readers thanks to the concerted attention of archivists and the digital revolution. Publications are nevertheless merely one area of discourse, with catalogues, posters, flyers, and programs also being mined to reconstruct the parallel, sometimes determining, universe of imagination, language, and consciousness that came into being alongside cinema.

If one idea emerges as central from these early discourses, covered in Part III, "Early Cinema Forms," it is that film takes many shapes and serves many functions. Describing its formal complexity is certainly as challenging today as it was back then, but it now requires a precise vocabulary, a keen awareness of aesthetic considerations, and an ability to identify multiple levels of relationships existing both within the film itself and between the film and the social world. Thus, "film form" is not merely understood in these pages as a set of relations between a film's intrinsic elements and the meaning they convey, but rather as a larger network of significance that inextricably links film's formal characteristics with its mode of production and exhibition as well as its cultural and historical context. Whether it is the way a particular motif operates within a film narrative to organize scenes and guide spectator interpretation; the potential

cultural significance of familiar genres when examined in relation to local intertexts; the growing educational appeal of cinema; or the often ignored industry of colorization some fifty years before it became commonplace; the study of film forms involves attention to both aesthetic concerns and the way these intersect with culture. In many ways, it is this particular aesthetic knowledge and sensitivity to visual, non-verbal phenomena that transforms the historian of early film into an early film historian, someone specialized in describing and relating visual phenomena to society at large.

Obviously, such film forms become particular types of experiences and objects in definable contexts, an area of study taken up in Part IV, "Early Cinema Presentations." It is widely recognized today that the reception of films is determined by the context of exhibition, which includes screening locations, programming (exclusively film or with other shows), and publicity (newspapers, storefront posters). Each of these factors of presentation provides a horizon of signs – vocabularies, genre categories, images, intertexts – against which film is compared, interpreted, and rationalized. In the earliest years, films were presented in fairgrounds, cafés, and regular theaters, varying according to country. Sometimes, as in the United States, film was presented in variety shows, eventually finding its own specific exhibition context in nickelodeons around 1905, which accelerated the growth of the industry and its public dissemination. The presentation of films was not limited to entertainment venues such as vaudeville theaters and nickelodeons, however; it found completely different uses and meanings in churches, schools, and prisons. Combining the study of film forms with the study of film presentations provides a far more accurate and detailed understanding of the relationship between spectators and films, in terms of defining a potential field of effects and reactions. Although we gain some understanding of the relationship based on the way films address spectators, everything surrounding the film is just as important in this process of constructing a reception and spectator position.

Part V, "Early Cinema Identities," draws attention to some of the new identities associated with film. In the early years, collaborators involved in the production of films – actors, filmmakers, and writers – usually went unnamed (a rare exception that proved the rule was Georges Méliès, who

quickly became associated with a genre of filmmaking, trick films, and was thus foregrounded, or at least referenced, in the publicity of the films). The more typical approach was to present films by manufacturer – a Pathé film, an Edison film, a Biograph production, etc. Although some of the actors may have been recognizable to audiences, individual participants involved in the film production process were rendered anonymous. Around the time films developed a more narrative orientation, roughly in 1907–8, characters became more important. Consequently, greater attention was given to the actors, who gradually became celebrities and stars, and which enabled production companies to use them, like today, as promotional vehicles. Mediating many film exhibitions was the figure of the film lecturer who explained elements of the story, sometimes even undermining the intended meaning or mood. Finally, a latecomer in early cinema, who stands as a representative of the future early cinema scholar, is the film archivist, displaying the essential traits of the cinephile, collector, and researcher. Thus, along with film spectators, many other identities were created in the world of early cinema, some of which were cultivated with specific functions in mind while others emerged as a consequence of the film phenomenon, creating new professions, hobbies, and institutional roles.

Part VI, “Early Cinema Recollections,” stands as a rejoinder to the conclusion of the previous section on the film archivist, presenting reflections on the theories underlying contemporary film archiving practices and rethinking early cinema in light of a modern, digital context. The notion of recollection represents some of the thematic structure of the section. Archiving implies collecting and preserving, attending to the difficulties of maintaining the material and conceptual integrity of the objects; but it also refers to a conscious process of bringing the past to our attention, to making it relevant today in a new context. In this way it fulfills one of the ideals of early cinema. Even if one of the most common disputes of the last century was the misguided patriotic imperative of determining which nationality was most involved in the invention of cinema, early cinema research is usually apolitical. Yet, there seems to exist an ideologically driven impulse in this field toward what Richard Rorty identified as the most salient contribution of the humanities, the continual renewal of the human imagination confronted with an epistemologically subjective and shifting

terrain of evidence.[13] Early cinema studies accepts, in other words, that part of the value of the field lies not just in the discovery of new documents or data, but in the ability to find new ways of making the subjective relevant, interesting, and exciting, "to recontextualize for the hell of it," for the sake of *performing* what-it-is-to-be-living-on-an-epistemological-precipice-but-finding-a-way-forward.[14] For early cinema studies, like most if not all fields in the humanities and the social sciences, contends daily with the epistemological fragility that is one of the legacies of postmodernism and poststructuralism. In performing the role of an inclusive community of scholars that welcomes the relativity, diversity, and challenge of finding a *raison d'être*, of seeing this community comprised not of a hierarchy of archivists at the bottom, historians in the middle, and theorists at the top, but as a level playing field in which each gains equal representation, a sort of political statement is suggested that seems meaningful to us: a concept of academic life perhaps. This book is intended, among other things, as a representation of this concept.

Notes

1 According to Jean Giraud, the French word *cinéma*, derived from *cinématographe*, began to enter public discourse around 1910 (although it was used on occasion before this). Its plurality of meanings was apparent from the outset: it could refer to the moving picture camera, to film manufacturing companies, to the movie-making profession, or to movie theaters (the latter two connotations have been carried over into English). It also designated, at times, "film in terms of art" or a "means of expression," but it took another decade before these superseded the other uses of the word. See Jean Giraud, *Le lexique français du cinéma des origines à 1930* (Paris: CNRS, 1958), 79–82. The same holds true for the English use of "cinema," which began to gain currency as a term designating films collectively in the mid-1910s.

2 See Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, ed. and trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

3 See André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, "Le cinéma des premiers temps: un défi à l'histoire du cinéma?," in *Histoire du cinéma. Nouvelles*

approches, eds. Jacques Aumont, André Gaudreault, and Michel Marie (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1989),49–63, published in English as "Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History?," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 365–80; and Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

4 Although André Bazin is sometimes credited with the first use of the term "classical cinema," David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson's *Classical Hollywood Cinema* has probably been the most influential in cementing the notion into an academic category. See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

5 See Richard Abel, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2005).

6 DOMITOR is an international society for the study of early cinema, founded in 1985 by five scholars from different countries (Stephen Bottomore, Paolo Cherchi Usai, André Gaudreault, Tom Gunning, and Emmanuelle Toulet). Since 1990, it holds a biennial conference dealing with a certain aspect of early cinema.

7 The 34th Congress of the International Federation of Film Archives (FiAF), organized by David Francis and Eileen Bowser in Brighton, is widely considered as the turning point in the development of early cinema studies. Richard Abel, "Intérêt(s) de l'historiographie du cinema des premiers temps," in Thierry Lefebvre and Michel Marie, eds., "Le cinéma des premiers temps. Nouvelles contributions françaises," *Théorème*, no. 4 (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1996), 113–30.

8 Tom Gunning, "Phantasmagoria and the Manufacturing of Illusions and Wonder: Towards a Cultural Optics of the Cinematic Apparatus," in *Le cinématographe, nouvelle technologie du XX^{e} siècle / The Cinema, a New Technology for the 20th Century*, eds. André Gaudreault, Catherine Russell, and Pierre Véronneau (Lausanne: Payot Lausanne, 2004), 33.

9 See J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

10 In this respect, it shares similarities with categories such as “cultural history,” a term that came to designate a discipline after methodological and epistemological concerns among historians made it necessary to rethink their very object of study, to *create* a new object of study.

11 Among them Noël Burch, Tom Gunning, Charles Musser, Barry Salt, and André Gaudreault.

12 Although Gaudreault and Gunning rightfully contested the term “primitive” to describe early cinema for its pejorative connotations and teleological bias (which carries over from the anthropological use of the term), some argue it remains useful and defend Noël Burch’s use of “primitive mode of expression.” The crux of the issue is that while the term “primitive” becomes increasingly offensive as the scope of early cinema shifts toward culture more broadly, it was initially intended to highlight the unique, non-institutional aesthetic of films from the period, even its subversive character in light of later industrialization of cinema. For an overview of this debate see André Gaudreault, “From ‘Primitive Cinema’ to ‘Kine-Attractography’,” in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 85–104; and Wanda Strauven, “From ‘Primitive Cinema’ to ‘Marvelous’,” in Strauven, *Cinema of Attractions*, 105–20.

13 See Richard Rorty, “Inquiry as Recontextualization: An Anti-dualist Account of Interpretation,” in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 93–110.

14 Ibid., 110.

Part I

Early Cinema Cultures

1

The Culture Broth and the Froth of Cultures of So-called Early Cinema[1]

André Gaudreault

In order to understand the conditions in which a media phenomenon as complex as cinema emerged and developed, it seems to me to be indispensable to look at the way it unfolded on the path to its institutional phase in terms of profoundly intertwined cultural factors. Cinema's emergence was an evolutionary process, one that proceeded by way of sometimes conflictual and turbulent encounters and exchanges with other cultural sectors present at the advent of moving pictures. As I have attempted to describe elsewhere,[2] what the earliest users of the kinematograph did was simply to employ a new device *within other cultural series*,[3] each of which already had its own practices. At the turn of the twentieth century, *the kinematograph was thus simply a new work tool*, neither more nor less. It was used *within* various cultural practices; *cinema*, at that point, *did not yet exist* as an autonomous medium.

It is thus going to extremes, in my view, to see cinema as having been invented in 1895, the year the Lumière Cinématographe – but not the cinema – was invented. The Cinématographe was the most advanced device of the day for capturing and restoring moving photographic images, but this procedure cannot be equated with "cinema." "*Cinématographe" and "cinema" are thus not the same thing*. What's more, if we pass from the specific French term for the Lumière device to the more generic English term in wide use at the time and take this word in its most general sense, *the kinematograph and cinema are not equivalent either*. The Lumière Cinématographe and similar other devices were in fact only a *preliminary*

to what would become, first of all, kinematography, and later cinema. We might thus say that the invention of the moving picture camera was a necessary but insufficient condition for cinema to emerge. This, essentially, is why French theory around the "dispositif" in the 1970s instinctively came up with the apt expression "appareil de base" (base apparatus), found in the work of Jean-Louis Baudry,[4] Jean-Louis Comolli,[5] and others: the Lumière Cinématographe, the Edison Kinetograph, the Bioskop, etc. were the *base*, not the *summit*.

For the cinema is a sociocultural phenomenon *which one does not "invent" just like that*: there is no "cinema" patent, because the cinema is not a procedure; it is a social, cultural, economic, etc. system. Cinema, then, is something that was *constituted*, *established*, and finally *institutionalized*. Once the elements of the initial procedure were invented – a certain kind of mechanism for stopping the film stock intermittently in front of the shutter, a certain kind of shutter for letting in light, a certain rate of movement to expose the negative, a certain kind of film stock with certain kinds of perforations, a certain kind of mechanism for transporting the film through the camera, etc. – it was still necessary to perfect various techniques for making moving pictures (moving thus from hardware to software). It was also necessary that this latest novelty item take its place in the ways and customs of all sorts of people (if only by establishing the new habit of "going to the movies"). It was necessary also to try out various ways of exhibiting these pictures by setting up a system in which the various agents involved would interact (from the person who shot the pictures to the person who showed them). And it was necessary that these agents emerge (or that others try their hand at kinematography and incorporate it into their existing practice). All these things required time; years in fact.

To attain a certain plateau of stability a fairly long period of trial and error first had to pass (this is essentially what "early cinema" was). In the final decade of the nineteenth century and a little beyond, a few hundred so-called "film pioneers" (all kinematographic neophytes, naturally) applied their wits to this task, drawn to the charms of the new device and to what had been made possible by individual viewing (with the Kinetoscope) or public projection (with the Cinématographe) of illuminated moving pictures. But at the time they laid their hands on this latest novelty and

incorporated it into their own practice, all these neophytes, with the exception of a few, were already a part of – rooted in, we could even say – a profession connected to kinematography to varying degrees (but at the same time alien to it) and to the things tied up in its invention (scientific research, photography, the magic lantern, stage shows, itinerant attractions, etc.). And each of these professions had a specific culture, and rules and norms as well. Cinema's emergence was thus the work of a *variety* of people with a *variety* of specific cultures, and it was out of this culture broth – we might even say this froth of cultures – that cinema emerged, many years after its initial procedure was in place.

The primary quality of early kinematography was thus that it was the site of a particularly polyphonic form of expression,[6] something we must absolutely keep in mind if we wish to understand how the institution "cinema" was able to take shape out of the cultural and institutional hodgepodge of early kinematography. We must also keep this fundamental historical fact in mind if we wish to understand how cinema managed to extract itself from this seemingly ungoverned world and become a new, autonomous medium, finally free of the grip of the cultural series which nourished it early on.

The polyphonic nature I ascribe to so-called "early cinema" is just as true of the period immediately before Thomas A. Edison and W. K. L. Dickson's invention of the Kinetograph (around 1889–91) and the Lumière brothers' invention of the Cinématographe (around 1894–5). The culture of the period leading up to the invention of the so-called base apparatus was one of multiple series, just like that of nascent kinematography. Each of these inventors, when they turned to the question of analyzing and synthesizing movement using images, were already a part of one or several established cultural or scientific series, and each of their propositions derived, necessarily, from the cultural or scientific series to which they belonged (and was in their own image). This was true of Étienne-Jules Marey and Georges Demenÿ, for example, and also of Edison and Dickson, all of whom had a chronophotographic approach, while the Lumières had a photographic approach. But it was also true of Émile Reynaud, whose approach was consistent with the cultural series optical toy, which he combined with the series illuminated projection. Nor is it surprising that the

Lumières' device unmistakably resembled a still camera and that a Lumière picture had the appearance of a photograph suddenly come to life. But this is no stranger than the fact that the animated drawings in Reynaud's Théâtre optique seem to have come straight out of some sort of improved Praxinoscope, which, with its mirrors and cylinder, in reality it was.

This is an essential question for anyone trying to determine who invented the base apparatus. In this sense, we can say that every cultural series contributing to this race to invent "cinema" has its own hero: Reynaud for the cultural series optical toy; Marey and Edison for chronophotography; Lumière for photography; and, for the magic lantern, as we will see below, Birt Acres. Naturally, a statement like this should not be taken literally, but we should keep it in mind just the same when analyzing such a highly multiple and complex phenomenon as the invention of the base apparatus, which arose out of a variety of cultural and scientific series, each with its own role to play in the aforementioned invention.

For proof of this we need look no further than the following statement by the magic lanternist Roger Child Bayley, dating from 1900. Five years after the Lumières patented their Cinématographe and without any apparent polemical intent, Bayley was able to state not only that kinematography was "lantern work" and that the base apparatus was a "Kinetic Lantern," but that the inventor of what we describe as the base apparatus was Birt Acres, a renowned lanternist, British like Bayley moreover, and that the other inventors of kinematographic procedures, with their Latin and Greek names, were followers and imitators:

> In the beginning of 1896 a novelty in lantern work was first shown in London in the form of Mr. Birt Acres' Kinetic Lantern, as it was then called, by which street scenes and other moving objects were displayed on the screen in motion with a fidelity which was very remarkable. Almost immediately afterwards a number of other inventors were in the field with instruments for performing the same operation, and animated lantern pictures under all sorts of Greek and Latin names were quite the sensation of the moment.[7]

What Bayley is doing here is locating the invention of the kinematograph on the side of the cultural series of which he was a champion and leading figure: the magic lantern. We might imagine that he did so without any

malice or under the influence of any sort of dogmatic “anti-Lumière” sentiment. From his perspective as a lanternist, this is how things unfolded, and we are obliged to agree: this is *also* how things unfolded. Like the emergence of cinema, the perfection of the base apparatus was an evolutionary phenomenon, and I take my hat off to anyone who can say what and when (the device and date) enables us to name its sole inventor. Edison invented 35 mm film and something akin to *moving pictures* around 1890. Reynaud, for his part, had already introduced the perforated film strip and invented something akin to the *illuminated projection of moving images* around 1888. Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. In this obstacle course whose finish line is establishing whom we should acknowledge as the inventor of the base apparatus, we should ask ourselves what the most important question is. Is projection the determining criterion, or is the invention of a device for individual viewing sufficient? If we were to determine that public projection is *the* decisive factor, then we must ask ourselves whether admission to this public event had to be paying for it to be recognized as the “real” first time, as Georges Sadoul, for example, believed. Before asking themselves such questions, however, serious historians should also ask themselves whether this quest for the “First, Defined and Definitive invention,” to borrow Michel Frizot’s phrase,[8] is worth the trouble or whether in the end it isn’t an exercise in extraordinary vanity.

Bayley’s text is a patent example of an attitude which interprets a given media context through the lens of a particular cultural series (in this case, the magic lantern) to the detriment of all others. And this attitude found fertile ground in trade journals of the day. From the start, the very titles of the journals in which the new device and the new and quickly growing cultural series were found tell us a lot about the connections between the kinematograph and the different cultural series that adapted it. Before the founding of trade journals devoted specifically to kinematography[9] on the path to cinema’s institutionalization, the kinematograph found refuge in trade journals devoted to a heterogeneous and exogenous group of cultural series, including the *Optical Magic Lantern Journal and Photographic Enlarger* in England, the *Industriel forain* in France, and the *New York Dramatic Mirror* in the United States. Here is fertile ground for researchers today interested in studying at close hand inter-series relationships in the

days of kinematography and the signs of cinema's growing institutionalization. A highly relevant example of this latter process can be found, precisely, on the very cover page of the *Optical Magic Lantern Journal and Photographic Enlarger* (Figure 1.1), whose name itself was altered many times over the years, each time reflecting the latest outcome of the constant battle between two cultural series, the aging magic lantern and the dashing young kinematograph. The journal was launched in 1889 without any mention in its title of the kinematograph (and for good reason!). In 1904 it changed its name to the *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal*[10] (Figure 1.2), introducing the series "kinematography" in place of the cultural series "photography" ("*Photographic Enlarger*"). Then in 1907, when the journal was renamed the *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* (Figure 1.3), cinema and the magic lantern switched places and kinematography took the lead position. The journal changed its identity once more in 1919, when the magic lantern was completely eliminated from its name, which now referred to only one of its two initial terms, becoming the *Kinematograph Weekly* (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.1 Header of an issue of the *Optical Magic Lantern Journal and Photographic Enlarger* (1889–1904).

Figure 1.2 Header of an issue of the *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal* (1904–7).

Figure 1.3 Header of an issue of the *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* (1907–19). Collection Cinémathèque québécoise.

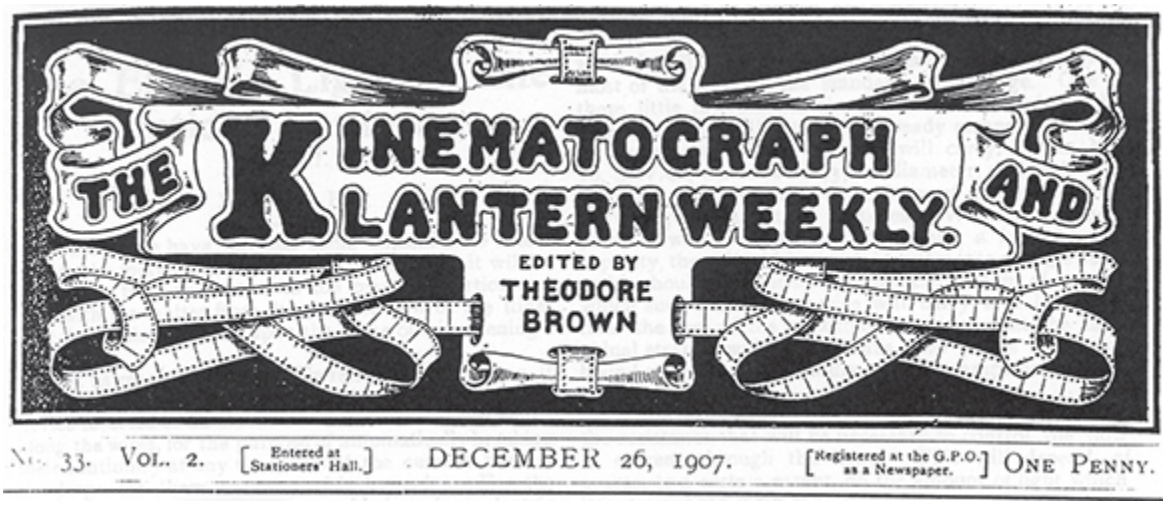

THE KINEMATOGRAPH AND LANTERN WEEKLY.
EDITED BY THEODORE BROWN
No. 33. Vol. 2. [Entered at Stationers' Hall.] DECEMBER 26, 1907. [Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper.] One Penny.

Figure 1.4 Header of an issue of the *Kinematograph Weekly* (which began publication in 1919). Collection Cinémathèque québécoise.

KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY
The Original and Leading British Film Trade Paper. First Published in 1907
No. 1,135 Vol. 143 [Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper.] JANUARY 17, 1929

In the end, then, the magic lantern was kicked off the cover of a journal initially devoted almost exclusively to that cultural series! What a flabbergasting fate for a medium which saw its aura turn sour over a relatively short period of time (from 1889 to 1919). This decline can be tracked simply by observing the lot of the magic lantern on the journal's cover: until 1904, the lantern was both optical and magic (the *Optical Magic* Lantern); in 1904 it ceased to be magic and became only optical; in 1907 it became even more modest, a mere "lantern" that was neither magic nor optical; and in 1919 it became so small that it disappeared from the journal's cover!

And is the great magic lantern we are discussing here, which yielded so quickly and so dramatically to the kinematograph, the same magic lantern Bayley described as the very birthplace of the kinematograph? Yes, one and the same. But it lost its magnificence and saw a decline in a few short years that some people might interpret as its death – which was not exactly the case. While the magic lantern as an *institution* disappeared and was well and truly dead, the *function* of the base apparatus of that institution has remained quite alive. The proof of this can be seen in all those lecturers who travel the wide world illustrating their talks with those dematerialized slides that a software program such as PowerPoint, installed on a computer and coupled with that later manifestation of the magic lantern, the *digital projector*, the veritable magic lantern of modern times, enables them to project onto a screen (just like the good old days!).

This brief history of the dealings between the cultural series magic lantern and the cultural series kinematography is just one example of what is meant by the "polyphony of early cinema" or the multiplicity of tongues spoken by the various cultural series that the kinematograph brought together when it started out. These series spoke, in synchrony but not necessarily in harmony, within this new cultural series, moving pictures. This polyphony accompanied the kinematograph throughout its transformation into cinema, a process that led to its "second birth," which Philippe Marion and I first attempted to describe some twelve years ago, in 1999, when we introduced the model of cinema being "born twice."[11] When we first outlined our model in rough form, we were trying to express the need to separate the invention of a procedure (ca. 1890–5) from the emergence of the institution cinema (ca. 1908–12), and finally to put an end to attaching one (institutionalization) to the other (invention). Something that was done, for example, when the centenary of *cinema* was celebrated, whose chosen date was that of the invention of a *technical procedure*, the Lumière Cinématographe. As I have been proclaiming from the rooftops for several years now, the period of what we now call early cinema was a time when *kinematography* was transformed into *cinema* by means of a change of *paradigm* radical enough to oblige us to distinguish clearly between the two and to see the passage from one to the other as a rupture.

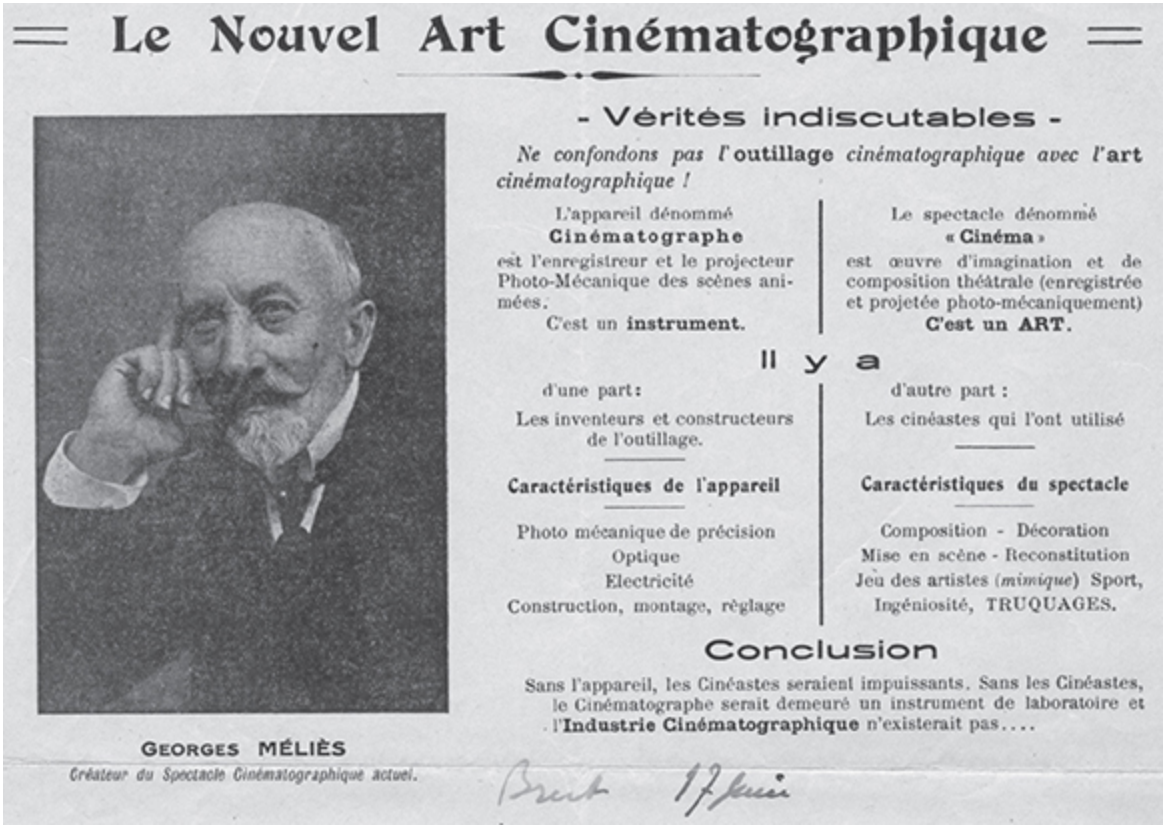
The organizers of cinema's centenary celebrations in 1995 are among those who would be uncomfortable with the position I adopt here. These celebrations, by virtue of the mere fact that they took place that year, implicitly recognized the Lumière brothers as the inventors not only of their Cinématographe (which is a proven fact) but also of cinema (which is contestable on many fronts). This recognition, while not universal, is granted by many around the world. The idea of the Lumières' supremacy had not yet become prevalent in the 1920s, however, judging from the prudent description of the historical importance of the first public, paying projection with the Lumière Cinématographe on a commemorative plaque mounted on the outside wall of the Grand Café: "HERE ON DECEMBER 28, 1895 / WAS HELD / THE FIRST PUBLIC PROJECTION / OF ANIMATED PHOTOGRAPHS / USING THE CINÉMATOGRAPHE / A DEVICE INVENTED BY THE LUMIÈRE BROTHERS."[12]

We know what this plaque wishes to (and should) commemorate: a *true first* (rarely are plaques installed to celebrate a "second time"): "the *first* public projection of animated photographs" *in the entire world* thus took place, if we believe this plaque, at the Grand Café in Paris on December 28, 1895. This, we now know, is thoroughly mistaken.[13] If we look a little closer, however, we can see another meaning in the plaque's text, a meaning which would make its author absolutely unmistaken. What the plaque may be trying to say is that on December 28, 1895, in this place, on whose wall this plaque has been affixed, there took place not "the first public projection of animated photographs" *in the entire world*, but "the first public projection of animated photographs" *using the Lumière Cinématographe*. This, of course, borders on truism and tautology. But that is what the plaque's text says, in black and white: "the first public projection of animated photographs *using the Cinématographe*." Using the Cinématographe – the *Lumière* Cinématographe, of course …

The idea of clearly distinguishing "kinematography" and "cinema" is far from new. This distinction, in French at least, can be found in various places throughout the history of film history. This was the case with the very title of the book Jacques Deslandes wrote in 1966 with Jacques Richard: *Histoire comparée du cinéma: du cinématographe au cinéma*

("Comparative History of Cinema: From Kinematography to Cinema").[14] The same distinction underlies the powerful hypothesis developed by the sociologist Edgar Morin ten years earlier, in his masterful and widely known volume *The Cinema, or the Imaginary Man*,[15] in which he argues that the arrival of Méliès in the world of kinematography was, precisely, the moment of transition between one phenomenon, kinematography, and the other, cinema. This idea is similar to the one passionately advanced in the late 1920s by Maurice Noverre and his journal *Le Nouvel Art Cinématographique*, something made *manifest* by the tribute to Méliès on his letterhead (Figure 1.5), which reads like a *manifesto*. According to Noverre, the kinematograph was a mere recording device, a mere instrument – unlike cinema, which is a multi-faceted entertainment and an art form.

Figure 1.5 Letterhead of *Le Nouvel Art Cinématographique*, journal operated by Maurice Noverre (ca. 1928).


Le Nouvel Art Cinématographique
- Vérités indiscutables -
Ne confondons pas l'outillage cinématographique avec l'art cinématographique !
L'appareil dénommé Cinématographe est l'enregistreur et le projecteur Photo-Mécanique des scènes animées. C'est un instrument.
Le spectacle dénommé « Cinéma » est œuvre d'imagination et de composition théâtrale (enregistrée et projetée photo-mécaniquement) C'est un ART.
Il y a
d'une part : Les inventeurs et constructeurs de l'outillage.
d'autre part : Les cinéastes qui l'ont utilisé
Caractéristiques de l'appareil
Photo mécanique de précision
Optique
Electricité
Construction, montage, règlage
Caractéristiques du spectacle
Composition - Décoration
Mise en scène - Reconstitution
Jeu des artistes (mimique) Sport,
Ingéniosité, TRUQUAGES.
Conclusion
Sans l'appareil, les Cinéastes seraient impuissants. Sans les Cinéastes, le Cinématographe serait demeuré un instrument de laboratoire et l'Industrie Cinématographique n'existerait pas....
GEORGES MÉLIÈS
Créateur du Spectacle Cinématographique actuel.

If the idea of distinguishing between "kinematography" and "cinema" is far from new, the idea of cinema's second birth is not as new as we might

first think either. I have even been able to locate this expression (*seconde naissance* in French) in two old articles written by famous authors: Alexandre Arnoux in 1928 and André Bazin in 1953. These two articles were written in the midst of two of the worst identity crises the cinema has ever seen: the first caused by the arrival of talking films and the second brought about by the introduction of television. Arnoux argued the following about the talkie invasion, which some people saw as particularly threatening: "We cannot remain indifferent. We are witnessing a death, or a birth, no one can yet say which. Something decisive is happening in the world of screen images and sound. Second birth or death? This is the question facing cinema."[16]

Second birth or death? Arnoux's subtle question refused to see the threat hanging over cinema (the disappearance of "silent" films) as something solely negative. Bazin, for his part, at a time when television held great fascination for him, wrote an article whose title was symptomatic: "Is Cinema Mortal?,"[17] a good indication of the disturbing effect the arrival of television had on many people in the film world. In his article, Bazin refers to this "second birth" of cinema after the Lumières' invention, which was initially a mere technological curiosity, became a form of entertainment:

> Perhaps it was only through a trick of the mind, an optical illusion of history, fleeting like a shadow cast by the sun, that for fifty years we have been able to believe in the existence of cinema. Perhaps "cinema" was just a stage in the wide-reaching evolution of the means of mechanical reproduction … In the end Lumière was right when he refused to sell his camera to Méliès on the pretext that it was a technological curiosity useful at best to doctors. It was cinema's *second birth* that turned it into the entertainment it has become today.[18]

First birth and second birth are more than just a question of quantity. We need to take a minimally qualitative leap to be able to speak of a "birth."[19] A qualitative leap on the order of a radical change of paradigm (in this sense, the addition of color and the arrival of wide-screen cinema, for example, cannot be seen as paradigmatic changes under the model Philippe Marion and I advance). Everything also depends, of course, on the boundaries you impose on the series you are in the process of constructing

when you begin to enumerate its component parts. Take for example a cultural series made up of something like “illuminated projection of animated photographs.” It is understood that Edison’s Kinetoscope (lack of projection) and Émile Reynaud’s Théâtre optique (lack of photographic images) will immediately be excluded from this series. This is the choice that traditional film historians have made by privileging the famous “first public, paying projection” of December 28, 1895 as the point of origin of their series “cinema.” “So, they were wrong!” I am tempted to say, without taking my invective too seriously, in that the construction of series depends largely on the free will of each researcher and the needs of their work. What we should realize, however, is that in constructing a series which is not yet socially recognized, one runs the risk that this series will never be recognized. This is exactly what happened to Maurice Noverre when, in the early 1930s, he openly and passionately campaigned for the title “inventor of cinema” to be conferred on Étienne-Jules Marey:

> Our Victory is complete.
>
> The Étienne-Jules Marey Centennial Celebrations (1830–1904) took place on June 24 and 25, 1930 in Paris and on June 28 and 29 in Beaune, Côte-d’Or in an atmosphere of indescribable enthusiasm.
>
> In his speech of June 29, Mr. Marraud, the Minister of Education, hailed in Marey “the builder of the first Cinématographe using moving film” (1887).
>
> The Great Master of the Université de France has spoken. Our Cause has been heard.…
>
> The history of the origin of the Cinématographe in France has now been definitively revised.[20]

Definitively? Not on your life! Indeed this is not the version that has come down to us through “official history” (at least not to date, but a change of course is always possible …). The Lumière brothers still reign in the firmament of the invention of cinema. Forever? Not necessarily, because the wind is shifting, and for two sets of reasons, it seems to me. The first are historiographical and the second historical. The historiographical reasons are easy to identify: today we no longer write history the way it was written in the latter half of the twentieth century. The question “Who invented

cinema?" has been taken apart piece by piece and no longer has any meaning today. We now realize that if the answer to this question is not obvious, it is because the question is badly posed. What's more, scholars today increasingly subscribe to the idea that the arrival of the kinematograph (whether the Lumière Cinématographe or the kinematographs of its competitors does not matter here) brought about a true rupture in those cultural series which took it up and were already the least bit institutionalized.

Concerning the historical reasons, we might mention the recent digital wave, which is literally upending all our previous conceptions, including the idea in place until quite recently of what constitutes "cinema." We would appear to be in the process of migrating to a new paradigm (are we thus in the presence of a new, third birth of cinema?).[21] A new paradigm for which *photographic* technology is no longer the *nec plus ultra*, or even the *sine qua non* condition of "cinematicity." And who, barely ten or fifteen years ago, would have guessed that?

The effects of the digital turn are numerous, in that they affect every aspect of Bazin's "industrial art."[22] When we accept the idea that the contemporary sphere of "cinema" includes watching DVDs in our living rooms and that "films" (we still call them "films," even when they are no longer made on celluloid) can now reach an *isolated viewer* without *any form of projection* (this had already been the case, but only marginally, since the invention of television, which initiated this change of paradigm),[23] then the Kinetograph/Kinetoscope model returns to the fore! It then becomes easy to bring back into service a cultural series that had never entirely given up the ghost (especially in the United States, where many people believe that the inventor of cinema – of movies, moving pictures, and motion pictures – was Edison), for which the relevant feature, as one says in linguistics, for determining whether or not something is cinema is not the "public projection" of animated photographs but the mere "animation" of these images: the simple fact that they are, precisely, animated.

When in addition we take into consideration the proliferation today of synthetic images (*without a trace of photography*) in the sphere we still call

“cinema,” what returns to the fore is Émile Reynaud’s Théâtre optique! We know that Reynaud, who was literally put into quarantine by teleological film historians, committed a “deadly sin” in their eyes. For when designing the Praxinoscope (and its various later manifestations), he rejected the obturation produced by the viewing slots used in the Zoetrope and the Phenakistiscope in favor of a system of mirrors placed around the circumference of a polygonal drum. This method was deemed anti-cinematic and downright “regressive” by these film historians,[24] who, rightly or wrongly, saw the principle of obturation as fundamental to cinema. From this teleological perspective, the photographic element was cruelly lacking in the Théâtre optique,[25] even if, with its hanging screen, on which pictures were projected for an assembly of viewers, Reynaud’s system (whose orthodoxy would have delighted Baudry!) was the same sort as that of the kinematograph.

All the same, Reynaud clearly did carry out *paying public projection of moving images* (on a *perforated strip*, moreover) *38 months before December 28, 1895*, as astonishing as that sounds.

That wasn’t enough for traditional film history, however, to keep Reynaud and his methods in the race. Nonetheless, the future of this veritable repressed figure in film history looks paradoxically rosy. The present-day context lends itself perfectly to Reynaud’s return to grace. His ghost knocks regularly at the entrance to film historiography but is turned away just as regularly (although less and less violently, it seems to me). Over the past few years there have been several premonitory signs of this return to grace, some less elegant than others. One example of the latter is a fairly recent volume by Bernard Lonjon which begs the question by making Émile Reynaud the *true inventor of cinema* (the very title of his book) and even Puy-en-Velay, the city where Reynaud began his work, the “birthplace of the *cinématographe*” (with lower-case “c” of course) as early as June 1875![26]

The appearance of an incendiary volume as questionable and questioning as Lonjon’s shouldn’t be surprising, however. It is a simple matter of the pendulum swinging too far the other way. Because Reynaud’s Théâtre optique does not occupy anywhere near the place it should in histories of

cinema, it was only natural that some day someone would come along who would try to set the record straight.

On this topic I must point out right away that the question of Reynaud's place in film history, and that of other "pioneers," must not be posed in terms of distributive justice. It is not the historian's task to acknowledge the virtues of any particular individual, even if this is often how things work. The reason Reynaud occupies the tiny place he does today in *teleological histories of cinema* is simply because these are histories of *cinema*, and also because they are *teleological*. Because the history of "cinema" practiced today is less and less a history of *cinema* (by this I mean *cinema alone*: today there are, precisely, an increasing number of histories of projected images, moving images, etc.) and pays more attention than teleological history to cultural series contemporaneous with the invention and emergence of cinema, the place of Reynaud and his apparatuses is constantly being reevaluated. Naturally, when one looks at Reynaud's work through the lens of *cinema* and *cinema alone*, or rather what one might call "kine*photo*graphy," his "moving paintings" don't hold up and are automatically cast from the paradigm.

In fact our estimation of the importance of the work of all those who contributed to the "invention of cinema" depends on the series from which we see things. Once we look at the earliest evolution of kinematography from the perspective of a series in vogue during the final twenty years of the nineteenth century, say, such as that of "moving pictures" rather than that of cinema alone, our view changes entirely. Our first thought, at the sound of the expression "moving pictures," is to equate the term with "movies." Traditional film history has conditioned us to think this way. But the cultural series "moving pictures," with which we always associate the beginnings of cinema, is far from restricted to kinematography alone. In particular, this series can include Kinetoscope pictures (born into the world before kinematograph pictures), and the pictures found in Émile Reynaud's Théâtre optique (born into the world not only before kinematograph pictures but also before Kinetoscope pictures). This series might also include the magic lantern's "movable pictures," which came before all of them.

This idea of cultural series seems to me to be essential on both a methodological and a heuristic level, if only because it makes it possible to organize our discourse and change the way we categorize things and perceive them. A good example of this is a recent book by Dominique Willoughby, which serves in a sense as another means for the ghost of Reynaud to knock at the entrance to film historiography. Willoughby's volume is the product of the spontaneous effort of a historian looking to construct a cultural series and legitimate it, which for him is a way of writing the history of a "visual art that appeared 175 years ago: *images in movement created using a series of drawings, engravings or paintings, since its invention in 1833*."[27] Or, put more simply, what the author calls "graphic cinema," a series in which Reynaud, of course, occupies a special place. Willoughby also says of this series, moreover, that it was "the source of cinema" and that it extends "from optical toys to the fashion for Japanese anime by way of cartoons, experimental cinema, new kinds of graphic-animation feature films, and present-day digital techniques found in animation, image manipulation and trick effects."[28]

One gets the clear sense from these remarks that we are not far here from what is more traditionally described as the animated film or animated cinema, which in a sense was inaugurated by Reynaud (even though we must remember that with Reynaud there was, properly speaking, neither film nor cinema). In fact Reynaud's true rehabilitation, the legitimate return of this repressed figure, will come by way of the return of another repressed element of film history: *the cultural series animated pictures*. This return, Lev Manovich maintains, is manifest. Having argued that cinema, even though it was "[b]orn from animation," "pushed animation to its periphery, only in the end to become one particular case of animation,"[29] he suggests that the present-day context of digital culture has changed all that: "The privileged role played by the manual construction of images in digital cinema is one example of a larger trend – the return of procinematic moving-images techniques.… [T]hese techniques are reemerging as the foundation of digital filmmaking. What was once supplemental to cinema becomes its norm; what was at the periphery comes into the center. Computer media return to us the repressed of the cinema."[30]

Even before the dawn of the digital age, in 1991, Alan Cholodenko went so far as to confer upon animation the status of *cinema's founding principle* by inverting some of classical film theory's basic assumptions. In a veritable manifesto entitled "*Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, or The Framing of Animation," he wrote:

> Yet, while animation has been marginalized by the discourses and institutions of film … it is only through animation that film can define itself as film. Animation is what is traced in film … what film has effaced and sought to efface the effacement of, but what allows film to be.… I disagree with those who think of animation as only a genre of film.… Indeed … animation arguably comprehends all of film, all of cinema, was (and is) the very condition of their possibility: the animation apparatus. In this sense, animation would no longer be a form of film or cinema. Film and cinema would be forms of animation. Let us not forget the notion that the motion picture camera/projector *animated* still images called "photographs."[31]

It is thus apparent that the idea of putting on one's animation glasses in order to understand the evolution of cinema is thus present, whether implicitly or explicitly, in the work of several present-day scholars. Nevertheless, it has not yet attracted the attention it deserves or made the big impression it should have if its true importance were properly assessed.

In any event, today it seems to me to be necessary or even essential to the development of thinking about cinema to work to ensure that the cultural series animation returns in full force as a frame of reference for film as a whole, and to try to understand why it had been pushed to the periphery of cinema. We might even take a step in this direction by telling ourselves that the capturing-restoring paradigm[32] was consecrated as the primary structuring principle of the cultural series *moving pictures* in a relatively usurpatory manner, to the point of overshadowing the cultural series animation – and it is artists like Reynaud, the master of animation, who paid the cost.

Naturally, animation has always had its part to play in the chorus of genres on planet cinema, but the expression we use to describe it, "animated film," is already indicative of the way in which the cultural series has been

evacuated and the genre made a part of institutional cinema, placing it under a kind of guardianship. It is as if the cinema, long under the sway of the novelty effect of capturing and restoring on which institutionalization chose to build its identity, denied a significant aspect of its origins and the very first cultural series to which it belonged. On this point Cholodenko remarks:

> If one may think of animation as a form of film, its neglect would be both extraordinary and predictable. It would be extraordinary insofar as a claim can be made that animation film not only preceded the advent of cinema but engendered it; that the development of all those nineteenth-century technologies – optical toys, studies in persistence of vision, the projector, the celluloid strip, etc. – but for photography was to result in their combination/synthesizing in the animation apparatus of Emile Reynaud's Théâtre Optique of 1892; that, inverting the conventional wisdom, cinema might then be thought of as animation's "step-child."[33]

Or, as I have argued elsewhere, "In fact, in some respects, animation is kinematography and kinematography is animation."[34] Today, then, it is perhaps the capturing-restoring paradigm which should be concerned about *animation's* return to grace. This paradigm's dominant position is now more threatened than it ever has been. In our minds, of course, but also in the very real world of film production. This transition to a new paradigm we are witnessing today (cinema's supposed third birth – see above) appears to grant animation the role of *primary structuring principle*. With the erosion today of cinema's identity in the way it has been cast into turmoil by the assaults of digital hybridity and the widespread porosity brought about by the convergence of platforms and media, the *animation* of images, this principle that the cinematic institution went to some length to declare outside its identity or at best lacking or amiss, may be in the process of recovering its place as the founding principle of all things cinematic.

Notes

1 This chapter was written under the aegis of GRAFICS (Groupe de recherche sur l'avènement et la formation des institutions

cinématographique et scénique) at the Université de Montréal, which is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Fonds québécois pour la recherche sur la société et la culture. GRAFICS is part of the Centre for Research into Intermediality (CRI). Throughout this chapter I take up topics that I have developed over the past few years with Philippe Marion of Université de Louvain. Together, we have co-authored a number of articles and prepared numerous conference papers, to the extent that our ideas on early cinema have now become *shared*. The present chapter bears only one author's name because it was written by a single person, but a few passages in it are based on the undifferentiated "consciousness" that my colleague and I have developed together recently.

2 See in particular André Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

3 For a definition of the concept "cultural series," see chapter four of my volume *Film and Attraction*.

4 Jean-Louis Baudry, "Effets idéologiques produits par l'appareil de base," *Cinéthique* 7–8 (March 1970): 1–8, translated as "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus" in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press), 286–98; "Le dispositif: approches métapsychologiques de l'impression de réalité," *Communications* 23 (1975): 56–72, translated as "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema," in Rosen, *Narrative*, 299–318; and *L'effet cinéma* (Paris: Albatros, 1978). I am quite aware that the "base apparatus," according to Baudry's logic, is not limited to the movie camera alone and unquestionably connotes more than mere technical devices. Baudry indicates this clearly, in a style peculiar to the 1970s: "Thus the base cinematographic apparatus includes the film stock, the camera, developing, editing, etc., as well as the apparatus (*dispositif*) of projection. The base cinematographic apparatus is a long way from being the camera alone, to which some have said I limit it (one wonders why; to accomplish what kind of wrongful proceedings?)." (Translation modified slightly – Trans.)

5 Jean-Louis Comolli, a series of four articles entitled “Technique et idéologie” and published in *Cahiers du Cinéma* in 1971 and 1972 (nos. 229–31 and 233–5). The first of these appeared in an English translation by Diana Matias under the title “Technique and Ideology” in *Film Reader* 2 (1977): 128–40, and the latter two, under the same title and by the same translator, in Rosen, *Narrative*. They have recently been reprinted in French in Jean-Louis Comolli, *Cinéma contre spectacle* (Lagrasse: Éditions Verdier, 2009).

6 My thanks to Philippe Marion for suggesting this idea (in personal correspondence with the author).

7 Roger Child Bayley, *Modern Magic Lanterns: A Guide to the Management of the Optical Lantern for the Use of Entertainers, Lecturers, Photographers, Teachers and Others* (London: L. Upcott Gill; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900), 102. My thanks to Philippe Gauthier for bringing this volume to my attention.

8 Michel Frizot, “Qu’est-ce qu’une invention? (le cinéma). La technique et ses possibles,” *Traffic* 50 (2004): 319.

9 Such as *Moving Picture World* in the United States and *Bioscope* in England, both founded in 1907, and *Ciné-Journal* in France, founded in 1908.

10 Concerning the title of the journal, Stephen Bottomore informs us that “Re-launched as *Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* in 1904 under a new editor, Theodore Brown, the journal two years later began using the more ‘correct’ spelling of ‘kinematograph’ (from the Greek).” See Stephen Bottomore, “*Kinematograph & Lantern Weekly*,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 514.

11 André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, “A Medium is always Born Twice,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2005): 3–15. This is a translation of an article initially published in French in 2000, itself originally a paper presented to an international symposium entitled *La nouvelle sphère intermédiatique* organized in 1999 at the Université de Montréal by the Centre for Research into Intermediality. In the same vein and by the same authors, see also “The Neo-Institutionalization of Cinema as a New Medium,” in *Visual Delights 2: Exhibition and Reception*, eds.

Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Popple (London: John Libbey, 2005), 87–95. This model of the cinema's second birth was the topic of a recent conference, *The Second Birth of Cinema: A Centenary Conference*, organized by Andrew Shail at the University of Newcastle in the UK in 2011.

12 The year 1925 is often mentioned as the date this plaque was unveiled, but it was actually 1926 (March 17), a date confirmed by the March 18, 1926 edition of the journal *Comoedia*. See also the notice on the ceremony published in *L'Écran* (*Journal du Syndicat français des directeurs de cinématographes*) 520 (March 20, 1926). My thanks to Jean-Marc Lamotte for providing me with this information. The original French text reads as follows: "ICI LE 28 DÉCEMBRE 1895 / EURENT LIEU / LES PREMIÈRES PROJECTIONS PUBLIQUES / DE PHOTOGRAPHIE ANIMÉE / À L'AIDE DU CINÉMATOGRAPHE / APPAREIL INVENTÉ PAR LES FRÈRES LUMIÈRE."

13 It has been demonstrated that the Lathams in the United States with their Panoptikon, Armat and Jenkins in the United States with their Phantoscope, and the Skladanowsky brothers in Germany with their Bioskop carried out "public projections of moving photographs" (public and paying, moreover, just like the Grand Café event) in May 1895, September 1895, and November 1895, respectively. Readers wishing to learn more on this topic may consult Deac Rossel, *Living Pictures: The Origins of the Movies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); and André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, "Introduction: American Cinema Emerges (1890–1909)," in *American Cinema, 1890–1909: Themes and Variations*, ed. André Gaudreault (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 1–21.

14 Jacques Deslandes and Jacques Richard, *Histoire comparée du cinéma: du cinématographe au cinéma 1896–1906*, vol. 2 (Tournai: Casterman, 1966).

15 Edgar Morin, *The Cinema, or the Imaginary Man*, trans. Lorraine Mortimer (1956; repr., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

16 Alexandre Arnoux, untitled, *Pour Vous* 1 (November 22, 1928), in Roger Icart, *La révolution du parlant vue par la presse française* (Paris:

Institut Jean Vigo, 1988), 190. My emphasis. My thanks to Marnie Mariscalchi for bringing this article to my attention.

17 André Bazin, “Le cinéma est-il mortel?” *L’Observateur politique, économique et littéraire* 170 (August 13, 1953): 23–4. My thanks to Marco Grosoli for bringing this article to my attention.

18 Ibid., 24.

19 For Philippe Marion and I, the concept of cinema’s “second birth” is a colorful metaphor. Naturally, it should not be taken literally, which could prove unfortunate because of its biological connotation in particular. We discussed this question in detail in our presentation at the Newcastle conference mentioned in note 11 above, whose proceedings are forthcoming.

20 Le Nouvel Art Cinématographique [pseud.], “Le Nouvel Art Cinématographique,” editorial, in *Le Nouvel Art Cinématographique* 6 (2nd series; April 1930): 5–6. This journal was published by Maurice Noverre.

21 This is the position Philippe Marion and I put forward at the Newcastle conference described in note 11 above.

22 Bazin, “Le cinéma,” 24.

23 Bazin, in his article “Le cinéma est-il mortel?,” continued: “But we might very well imagine through a misunderstanding that the evolution of what we have mistakenly taken for an art could be brutally interrupted by the appearance of a more satisfactory technology than television. Satisfactory not from an artistic point of view – which is beside the point here – but rather as a means of automatically reproducing reality. One would need a childlike idealism to believe that cinema’s artistic quality could defend it from the advantages of television, whose image, for we moderns, achieves the miracle of ubiquity” (24).

24 In so doing, these film historians overlooked the fact that the mirrors and prism system was long popular in a number of highly cinematic professional editing tables, including the famous Steenbeck.

25 Nevertheless, Reynaud’s device was designed to accommodate, *as early as 1888*, the projection of *photographic* images. In this respect, see the description appended to Reynaud’s patent application for his invention of the Théâtre optique, filed on December 1, 1888 (invention patent no.

194,482), which states: “The poses depicted can be hand drawn or printed by a variety of reproduction techniques in black and white or color, or obtained from nature using *photography*” (my emphasis). This patent can be viewed at the following address: http://www.emilereynaud.fr/index.php/post/Brevet-d-invention-N-194-482-1888. Consulted most recently on July 15, 2011.

26 Bernard Lonjon, *Émile Reynaud: le véritable inventeur du cinéma* (Polignac: Éditions du Roure, 2007), 92.

27 Dominique Willoughby, *Le cinéma graphique. Une histoire des dessins animés: des jouets d’optique au cinéma numérique* (Paris: Les Éditions Textuel, 2009), back cover. My emphasis.

28 Ibid.

29 Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 302.

30 Ibid., 308.

31 Alan Cholodenko, “*Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, or The Framing of Animation,” in *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation*, ed. Alan Cholodenko (Sydney: Power Publications, 1991), 213.

32 For a definition of this concept, see André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, “Le cinéma naissant et ses dispositions narratives,” *Cinéma & Cie. International Film Studies Journal* 1 (2001): 34–41.

33 Cholodenko, *Illusion of Life*, 9.

34 In a paper I gave at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference in Los Angeles in March 2010, in which I argued that only since cinema’s institutionalization can we see animation as an independent or relatively independent film genre. I maintained that it is not possible to distinguish between *animation* and *cinema* during the early years of kinematography. Indeed these two “branches” of cinema formed a single whole. I also suggested that the underlying principle of kinematography was to create, frame-by-frame, *stop motion*, sixteen times per second. Indeed the moving picture camera was designed to stop each time the film was exposed to light. Hence the following question: “Could we not go so far as to say that, at bottom, all films are animated films?” And I reminded those present that one of the bygone terms for moving pictures already provided a partial response to this question, to wit: *animated photographs*.

The text of this paper was later reworked as a guest editorial entitled “Could kinematography be animation and animation kinematography?” which I co-authored with Philippe Gauthier. See *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 6, no. 2 (2011): 85–91.

2

Toward a History of Peep Practice

Erkki Huhtamo

In the mid-1980s, Charles Musser coined the concept "history of screen practice," explaining that it "presents cinema as a continuation and transformation of magic lantern traditions in which showmen displayed images on a screen, accompanying them with voice, music, and sound effects."[1] Accordingly, he dedicated the first chapter of *The Emergence of Cinema* (1990) to forms that preceded "modern motion pictures."[2] Musser traced the history of screen practice back to the seventeenth century, in particular to the work of the Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher (1602–80), who famously described and illustrated the magic lantern in the revised edition of his *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* (1671). Although it is nowadays generally agreed that Kircher was not its inventor (an honor assigned to the Dutch scientist Christiaan Huygens), he had, wrote Musser, played a role in the "demystification of the projected image." Kircher also described a device called the parastatic microscope, a handheld viewer for peeping at images painted on a rotary glass disc. Musser compared it with the magic lantern: "The two instruments shared many elements – including subject matter – but had distinctive qualities as well. One encouraged collective viewing, the other private spectatorship and voyeuristic satisfaction. These two ways of seeing images were to produce closely related, overlapping practices that paralleled each other throughout the period covered by this volume [up to 1907]."[3]

Edison's peephole Kinetoscope played a role in Musser's narrative about the emergence of cinema, yet he never ventured on the parallel path his comparison pointed toward. For, indeed, alongside "screen practice" there have been *other* practices of displaying and consuming pictures, including

one that could be named “peep practice.”[4] A huge number of devices for peeping at visual imagery have been concocted since Kircher’s parastatic microscope (and even earlier). Some of them were designed for private use, while others were exhibited in public spaces. Many were used by just one peeper at a time, while others have accommodated several. Assessed against this background, the peephole Kinetoscope feels less like a “novelty item, a kind of optical toy which enjoyed a brief fad,” as Musser describes it, than an outcome of a deeply rooted tradition.[5]

References to peeping occur in most accounts about “pre-cinema,” but peep practice as a wider phenomenon has received scant attention. The purpose of this chapter is to release it from its obscurity by outlining its history and highlighting some of the issues it raises, in particular the relationship between public and private modes of peeping, and the dynamic between location-based and “nomadic” forms. This text does not pretend to say everything there is to say about an extremely rich topic. It merely provides a series of peeps into a realm that, in spite of its seeming heterogeneity, has an identity that can be grasped at various points of its becoming.

The Incubation Era of Peep Media

The “incubation era” of peep media extended from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, a period of religious and political upheavals, geographical expansion, emerging capitalism, and radical transformations in science, worldviews, and modes of perception.[6] Three currents in particular contributed to its formation: the invention and dissemination of mathematical (linear) perspective in Renaissance Italy; the ideology of natural magic which was particularly prevalent among Jesuit savants; and the cultural manifestations of *curiositas*, including the veneration of religious relics and popular displays of curious things, as well as the habit of collecting, classifying, and exhibiting rarities in “curiosity cabinets” and physics cabinets.

Analytical attention to visible reality during the Renaissance led to the development of optical instruments for observation, measurement, and

reproduction of reality.[7] Efforts to "project" three-dimensional spaces on two-dimensional surfaces by means of perspective rules resorted to peeping to define the tip of the "visual pyramid," and also as a way of demonstrating the results. "Perspective machines" were developed for these purposes.[8] One outcome of such activities was "perspective boxes" created by Dutch painters such as Samuel van Hoogstraten and Carel Fabritius.[9] They contained illusionistic interiors painted on the inner walls of a box. Viewing them through a carefully positioned hole created a perfect spatial illusion. Such boxes were showpieces for the privileged, and demonstrations of the painter's skills.[10]

"Natural magic" was characterized by the Neapolitan savant Giambattista della Porta (ca. 1535–1615) as the "practical part of Natural Philosophy."[11] As Lynn Thorndike remarks, "[n]atural magic is the working of marvellous effects, which may seem preternatural, by a knowledge of occult forces in nature without resort to supernatural assistance."[12] Part of natural magic was "artificial magic," the use of human-made contraptions to demonstrate phenomena of nature.[13] Peep boxes were such contraptions, commonly encountered in early "museums," "physics cabinets," and "cabinets of curiosities." They were associated with "catoptric magic," the art of manipulating reflected light. Mirrors were placed inside "catoptric theaters" to multiply objects, including jewels and beads, ad infinitum.[14] Such displays were metaphoric or allegorical. Kircher demonstrated his parastatic microscope with a glass disc depicting the Passion of Christ with eight successive views, but, as he noted, other topics could have been displayed in a similar way ("software" was already separated from "hardware").

In *Nervus opticus sive tractatus theoricus* (1675), Zacharias Traber, a Jesuit from Vienna, described a peep box containing a rotating horizontal wheel.[15] A miniature "stage set" was constructed inside the box, and tiny puppets or cut-out figures attached to the wheel. When a crank was turned, an endless procession – hermits in the desert or a scene from hell (with real flames!) – could be seen in a mirror placed obliquely opposite the peephole. The role of the mirror was all-important, because it virtualized the material and disguised the internal mechanism. Some devices accommodated several

peepers. Johann Zahn's hexagonal catoptric machine consisted of six separate compartments.[16] A glass painting was installed on each of the six walls of the box. When a person peeped inside through a horizontal slit above each painting, the scene was multiplied infinitely by two internal angled mirrors. The device could be placed on a crank-operated rotating platform, making it unnecessary for the peepers around it to change places.

According to Kircher, whom Descartes called more charlatan than scholar, his experiments served three goals: the "investigation of the learned," the "admiration of the ignorant and uncultured," and the "relaxation of Princes and Magnates."[17] The devices of natural magic were no doubt meant to boost his reputation as a credible scientist. Providing "relaxation" for the frequent visitors of Kircher's Museum at the Collegium Romanum served both the Jesuits' public relations and Kircher's own desire to be acknowledged as a true Renaissance man. The amazement created by his demonstrations was balanced by explanations of their rational causes, which became a lasting theme of media culture: the emphasis on both the trick and how it is done prevails for example in the fan cultures around special effect films. The "admiration of the ignorant and uncultured" – without explanations – found a life of its own outside the cabinets of the savants at gatherings of the "common people," who were eager to get their own share of the dawning media culture.

Peep Shows and the Culture of Attractions

By the early eighteenth century peep shows were exhibited at fairs and marketplaces. Their allegorical and natural-philosophical connotations were replaced by the sheer drawing power of *curiositas*. The peep show apparatus was particularly suitable for this purpose, because it hid its contents from the gaze until a coin had been handed to the exhibitor. The contents of the boxes are often difficult to decipher because of the nature of the apparatus – contemporary representations only show us its exterior. Some boxes contained puppets-on-a-string and miniature "sets" not unlike

those in portable cabinets of curiosities. Mass produced perspective prints known as *vues d'optique* were certainly common. Most of them depicted identifiable locations, turning itinerant peep shows into a virtual voyaging medium. Hand-painted pictures of battles and natural catastrophes were shown, and probably also erotic and scatological scenes, although evidence is scarce. Atmospheric effects were often added to the pictures. These were created by changing the direction of light falling on views that had translucent parts.

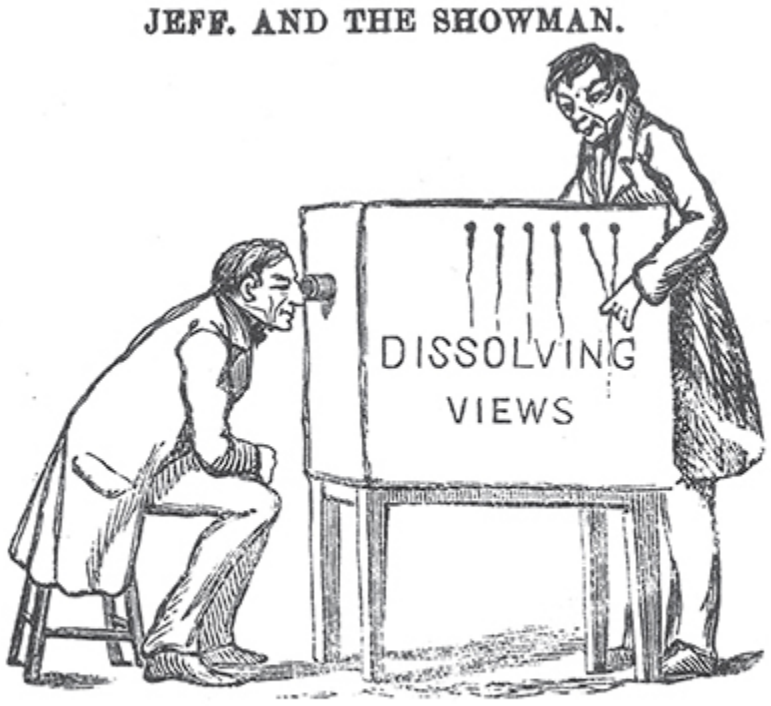
Public peep shows were one of the manifestations of a "culture of attractions" purporting to regulate the relationships among audiences, exhibitors, and attractions. The discourse on attractions within media culture was initiated by André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning in the mid-1980s.[18] Discussing early silent cinema, they identified traits that distinguished it from the narrative cinema of later times. The cinema of attractions was exhibitionist, addressing itself directly to the implied spectator, who was provided visual shocks and curiosities. It inherited many of its features from forms that had thrived at fairs and fairgrounds, displays of magic, magic lantern, and variety shows, etc. The central "mechanism" of the culture of attractions was the interplay between hiding and revealing. Banners, signboards, and auditory signals, such as barkers' cries and musical sounds, promised pleasures and curiosities kept just out of sight. For peep show exhibitors, puppets-on-a-string or caged animals on top of the box, as well as curious illustrations, written slogans, and marketing cries, served similar goals.

In his discussion of William Hogarth's *Southwark Fair* (an engraving based on a 1733 painting), Jonathan Crary pays attention to a peep show box seen amidst the carnivalesque chaos of the fair.[19] Crary contrasts it with the context, interpreting it as an early symptom of the process through which the viewing subject became modernized as a spectator. While the disorder of the carnival, to follow Crary's logic, "overturns a distinction between spectator and performer," the "immobile and absorbed figures, interfacing with the window of the peep show," represent an interiorized and private mode of experience that soon manifested itself in the bourgeois reading subject, and eventually in media spectatorship. Visual culture came

to be characterized by “the relative separation of a viewer from a milieu of distraction and the detachment of an image from a larger background.”[20]

Crary’s interpretation seems to fit the peep show, but it could be criticized for prioritizing the visual over the other senses. The peepers were in physical, tactile contact. This was caused by both the loose behavioral habits of the fair and the structure of the apparatus itself. Public peep shows often had several peepholes side by side, sometimes in two rows (for grown-ups and children). This made physical contact unavoidable. The fair had a dense soundscape the visitors could not escape – exhortations, shouts, bursts of laughter, showmen’s stories. The peepers surely commented on the sights as well, chatting with the invisible beings waiting behind their backs. In spite of visual immersion, peepers were firmly anchored to their surroundings. In Crary’s words: their “separation” from their “milieu” was “relative” at best.[21]

Figure 2.1 “Jeff and the Showman,” a propagandistic envelope from the American Civil War showing Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederate States of America, peeking into a peep show box. Peep show pictures were changed by strings, but “dissolving views” refers to another medium, a type of magic lantern show that was becoming popular at the time. American, first half of the 1860s. Author’s collection.


JEFF. AND THE SHOWMAN.
DISSOLVING
VIEWS
Showman.—At the end of the Avenue you perceive a white house, keep your eye on it and it will dissolve and fade from your view.

The popular fair as such may have been a declining cultural form (its subversive potential was viewed with increasing suspicion by the authorities), but street culture preserved many of its features, including the itinerant peep show exhibitor.[22] Yet, in urban environments, new kinds of attractions began to evolve. Arcades, department stores, expositions, pleasure gardens, sports stadiums, and amusement parks came to compete for nineteenth-century crowds. Media spectacles, installed in permanent premises, were part of this development. With the introduction of Cosmorama Rooms, peep shows began casting their reputation as superfluous penny entertainments by courting the bourgeoisie. This "transfiguration of the commonplace," to paraphrase Arthur C. Danto,[23] had been anticipated in the salons of the upper classes, where peeping at pictures had become a fad already earlier.

Peep Media in Private

Peep boxes for domestic consumption were made already in the eighteenth-century, although they were only within the reach of well-to-do consumers. Such pieces of "optical furniture" were generally smaller and more richly decorated than their counterparts at the fairs, but often also more versatile. Many peep boxes could be turned into camera obscuras by simply adjusting their elements. Such combination machines folded into a wooden box for storage or transportation, and were sometimes disguised as leather-bound books, adding a connotation of quality and prestige. The multifunctional design carried ideological undertones: instead of being conceived merely as "passive" consumers of preexisting *vues d'optique*, the proprietors were positioned as cultural producers in command of their surroundings – including the optical technology at their fingertips.

Similar *vues d'optique* were viewed both at fairs and in the parlors of the rich. Were the upper-class peepers aware of this? They certainly knew public peep shows from stories, paintings, engravings, tapestries, and porcelain figurines, and perhaps even from village fairs. Privileged children played peep showmen themselves. An oil painting by F. H. Drouais (1727–75) supports this argument.[24] It depicts two noble boys posing as touring Savoyards with their small peep show and hurdy-gurdy. The calm and confident expressions on their faces prove that these privileged youths knew none of the hardships of itinerant Savoyards. Elements of the life of the common people were emulated in upper-class activities as romanticized reenactments of folk culture. It hardly mattered that the quality of public peep shows was deplored by intellectuals. The art historian Arnold Houbraken is said to have stated as early as 1719 that "[o]nly rubbish is made nowadays in that genre."[25]

Another device that resembled the domestic peep box was the zograscope, or "optical diagonal machine." It was a kind of peep box without the box, consisting of a viewing lens and an adjustable mirror in a wooden table stand. Both devices were used to educate and to entertain by means of *vues d'optique*. Jean-Jacques Rousseau found a difference between the experiences provided by the immersive, enclosed peep box and the open "skeletal" zograscope (preferring the former), but one wonders how much such differences in the apparatus mattered in actual contexts of

use.[26] As the critique of Crary's reading of the Southwark Fair already pointed out, it is easy to overemphasize the role of visual immersion at the expense of other contributing factors. Judging by existing evidence, within the domestic parlor both devices often invited social interaction rather than visual seclusion and solitary introspection. The possibility to control and manipulate these devices emphasized their role as personal "media machines."

"Philosophical toys" continued the trajectory of domestic peep media in the next century. Although many of them became known as scientific demonstration devices, they were quickly turned into fashionable novelties for well-to-do bourgeoisie. As just one example among many, Milton Bradley's Zoetrope or the Wheel of Life (released in the late 1860s) was accompanied by a booklet titled *The Philosophical Principles of the Zoetrope, or Wheel of Life* (ca. 1867). It instructed the domestic users to develop an active relationship with the device – to place picture strips inside the drum and try different effects by spinning them faster and slower, or in different directions.[27] The booklet even instructed users to try out combinations of partly overlapping strips, leading to a principle of "editing" moving pictures.

Figure 2.2 Young girl peeking into an Alexander Beckers "sweetheart" cabinet stereoscope. A very early cabinet card by J. H. Kent, Brockport, NY, ca. 1866–8. The card was probably used for promotion. Both the cabinet card photograph and the cabinet stereoscope were still novelties. Author's collection.

It was not difficult to create one's own "software" for devices like the zoetrope, and so users turned into "media producers." Instructions for building optical devices and drawing pictures for them were published in countless nineteenth-century periodicals and manuals for parlor entertainments. *The Boy's Own Book of Indoor Games and Recreations* contained detailed instructions for making peep show boxes, which could be "about the size of an ordinary cigar-box, or large enough to cover a dining-room table."[28] The book encouraged the prospective children's room showman: "The following peep shows, if carefully and neatly made – and they are well within the capacity of any handy boy – will form permanent and most interesting recreations, to say nothing of the pleasure to be obtained in their construction."

Soon after its introduction at the Crystal Palace exhibition (1851), the stereoscope gave another impetus to domestic peep media. A mass market for both viewers and stereoscopic photographs developed. Viewer designs reflected social stratification. There were ornate cabinet models that held hundreds of views, but also moderately priced handheld models that became even cheaper as the century drew to a close. By 1900 stereoscopes were used in working-class homes and classrooms, and given away by companies using collectible stereocards as advertising gimmicks. Reflecting the earlier consumption pattern of *vues d'optique*, similar stereocards were viewed in different social settings.[29] Compared with the cultural practices inspired by other optical toys, stereoscopy emphasized consumption over personal media production. Although the relationship with the stereoscope was tactile, the vast majority of views were mass produced. Only well-to-do families and, later, dedicated hobbyists produced their own stereoviews.

The Cosmorama – An Urban Peeping Institution

The opening of the Cosmorama in Paris by Abbé Gazzera in January 1808 was a significant event in the history of peep practice – it was a permanent public institution, and remained a fixture of the city for decades.[30] It was installed at 231 Galerie vitrée, Palais-Royal, inside the new arcades constructed in the 1780s under the powerful Louis Philippe II, Duc d'Orléans (who used Palais-Royal as his residence). They were a fashionable place to while away the time and already housed other attractions, most importantly François Dominique Séraphin's (1747–1800) spectacle of *ombres chinoises*, as well as theaters, restaurants, and boutiques.[31] The Palais-Royal arcade was one of the sites where new urban life forms such as window shopping, flaneurism, and consumerism were developed. They were a perfect location for the Cosmorama, a picture arcade within an arcade.

Little research into the Cosmorama exists, perhaps because it has been considered a minor form compared with large-scale spectacles such as the

Panorama and the Diorama.[32] Although Gazzera's establishment closed its doors in 1832 (after operating for the last few years at another venue in the Vivienne arcade at 6 Vivienne Street), its model was imitated in other cities, including London, New York, and Boston. London's first Cosmorama was opened in 1820 at 29 St. James Street. It moved to 209 Regent Street in May 1823, remaining open until the late 1850s. In the 1820s, the Cosmorama Saloon became a stock feature of museums like Peale's Museum, John Scudder's American Museum and his son's Chatham Museum in New York, and the New England Museum in Boston.[33] It is not surprising that after P. T. Barnum had purchased Scudder's museum in 1842 and renamed it Barnum's American Museum, a Cosmorama Saloon became one of its permanent attractions. There were also countless traveling cosmoramas. The one by the Austrian painter and showman Hubert Sattler was exhibited widely in Europe and the United States.[34]

All permanent cosmoramas were more or less identical: a series of magnifying lenses was inserted into the walls of the salon for the purpose of peeping at paintings placed behind them.[35] The number of peepholes varied from about a dozen to several dozens. The pictures were illuminated by oil lamps or – as in the case of the Regent Street Cosmorama – by natural light. The programs were changed regularly, and each picture described in cheap leaflets sold on the premises. Gazzera's Cosmorama was advertised as a "historical, geographic and picturesque voyage to different parts of the world," providing a model for other cosmoramas.[36]

The Royal Cosmorama, which operated in London inside the tunnel under the Thames, praised itself in glowing terms: "The advantages of such an EXHIBITION!! are manifold; it is instructive as well as amusing, adapted to improve the taste, amuse the social circle, afford subject for interesting conversation, and accustom the young, through the medium of a noble Art, to contemplate with awe and admiration the beauties of Nature, and the wond'rous and magnificent Structures raised by men's hands."[37] The Cosmorama was meant as a fashionable gathering place for the bourgeoisie, a salon where one could peep into the lenses, but also just bide one's time and engage in conversations with peers. The mode of behavior that was built into the Cosmorama's apparatus implied bodily motion, recalling

activities like window shopping, flaneurism, and even a stroll on the panorama's viewing platform. Viewers had to displace themselves physically to "visit" all the sights/sites.

Not everyone found the Cosmorama a "noble Art." The admission price was often considered too high compared to the quality of its offerings. Writing about Gazzera's Cosmorama, a British tourist guidebook said that it "is little more than a large peep-show, in the manner of those for which, at Fairs and in the streets of London, one penny is charged; the views of colored prints magnified, which constitute this exhibition, is exceedingly dear at thirty sous each person."[38] One hostile observer wrote about the "deception of the cosmoramas, where, in a peep-show, you see through a magnifying glass decent coloured prints amplified into miserable large pictures."[39] This observation is interesting, because, instead of revealing defects, the magnifying lenses were meant to *increase* the illusion and to diminish the difference between the Cosmorama and large-scale spectacles like the Panorama and the Diorama.[40]

The Regent Street Cosmorama compensated for its shortcomings discursively by promoting itself as a Dioramic and Panoramic Exhibition. Still, a critic noted perceptively that "[a]t the Diorama it is difficult to bring the mind to consider the views as pictures only; here [at the Cosmorama], with one or two exceptions, the difficulty consists of divesting oneself of that knowledge."[41] Urban legends countered this problem. In *Elements of Physics*, Neil Arnott told anecdotes about incidents that happened "[o]ne day in the cosmorama": a "schoolboy visitor exclaimed with fearful delight that he saw a monstrous tiger coming from its den among the rocks; – it was a kitten belonging to the attendant, which by accident had strayed among the paintings."[42] Another young spectator visiting the Cosmorama "was heard calling that he saw a horse galloping up the mountain side; – it was a minute fly crawling slowly along the canvas."[43] Similar stories about the mind animating the inanimate, or mixing reality with illusion, are familiar from other media-cultural contexts as well, including the early silent cinema.

Overemphasizing the Cosmorama's immersive quality would misrepresent its character. Although dioramic effects of sunsets and sunrises

or of buildings on fire were concocted to provide additional value, the Cosmorama was less a high-tech attraction than a socially codified institution where instruction met amusement in forms that had been domesticated and adjusted to the norms of the bourgeois society. Besides being a picture gallery, it was a salon to meet – or at least to observe – one's peers. Lady Morgan remarked in a convivial tone about having "a peep at the Cosmorama of our friend, the Commandeur de Gazzera."[44] As an attraction Gazzera's Cosmorama's main assets were its variety and variability. It was claimed that at the time it closed its doors in 1832, it owned 260 paintings "representing the most remarkable sites and monuments of the different parts of the globe," and that at its largest the collection had contained no fewer than 800 paintings.[45]

Both the exhibition format and the subject matter changed little over the years, which explains why the Regent Street Cosmorama began to exhibit other kinds of attractions as well. While it continued changing its paintings behind the lenses, during its last twenty years it turned into a general-purpose exhibition room featuring exhibits as varied as "Xulopyrography; or, the art of engraving on charred wood," colossal models of Buckingham Palace, the Cathedral of Cologne, and the Roman Colosseum; the collections of Eugène François Vidocq, the criminal turned into a criminologist and private detective; and "The Most Superb and Magnificent Assemblage of Tapestried Needlework in the Universe."[46] This may well indicate that the appeal of peep media was declining as more spectacular forms, including moving panoramas and dissolving views, were gaining ground. These media were invigorated by stereoscopy that refused to stay within the confines of the Victorian home.

Peeping in Public: From Stereoscopy to Moving Images

Although the stereoscope is often considered a domestic media machine, its position was never fixed. It also enjoyed a public career that began soon after it had been introduced. Showmen embraced it as a novelty, and set up

touring exhibitions, allowing the curious to peek into this latest marvel. Already in the 1850s, the Philadelphia-based photographers Frederick and William Langenheim (the inventors of the photographic glass positive) and their collaborator William Loyd introduced their Cosmoramic (or Cosmorama) Stereoscope, and exhibited specimens publicly in a showroom in Philadelphia (also characterized as Langenheim's "diorama"). Although its design is uncertain, the device is said to have allowed the visitors to change the views by turning a crank.[47] The word "cosmorama" may have been chosen not only to associate it with a well-known public attraction, but also because it contained a sequence of views. Cabinet stereoscopes housing dozens of views were also marketed for private consumption; some of them must have been taken on tour by enterprising showmen.

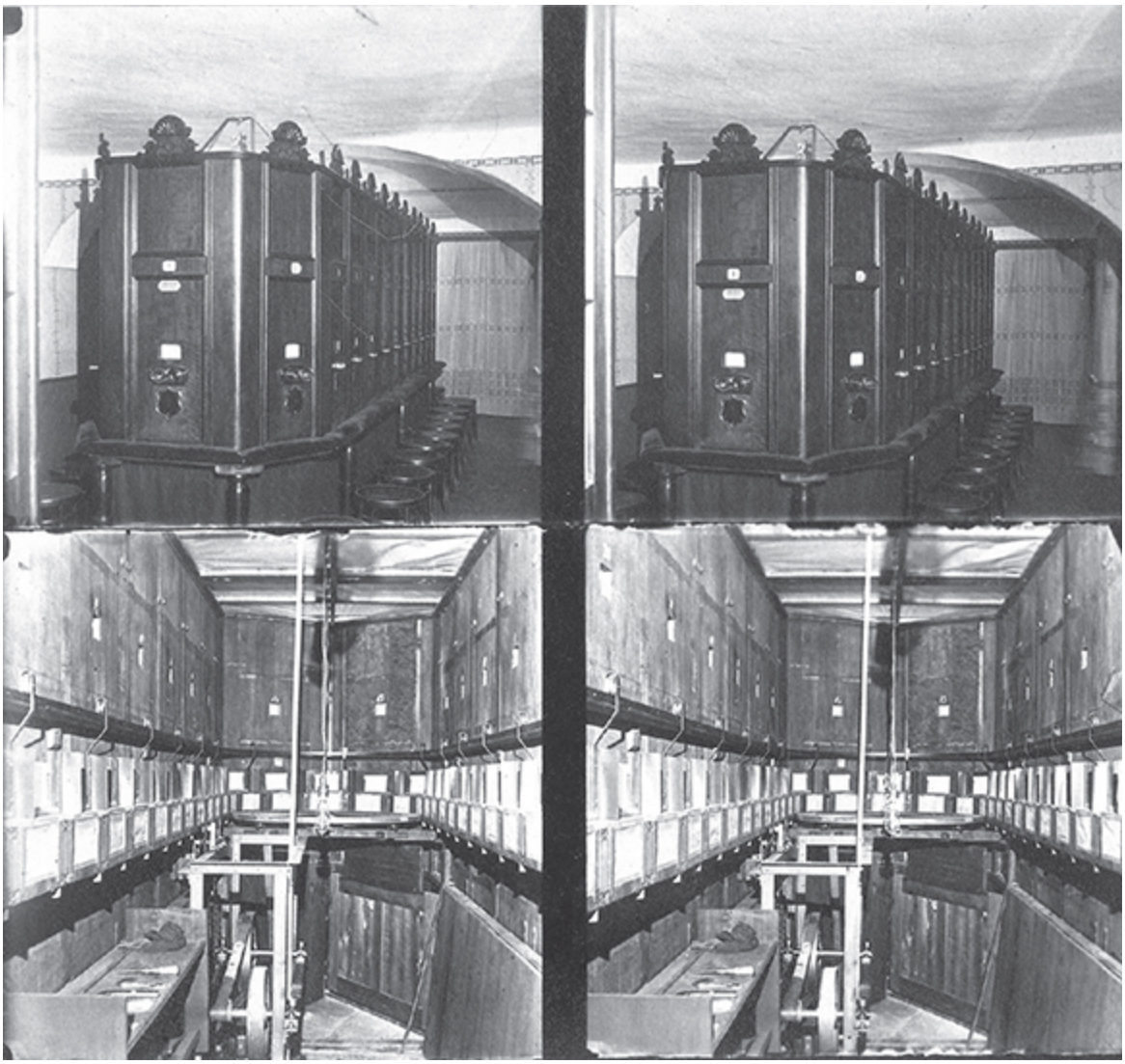
Sir David Brewster, who designed the popular handheld model that spurred the stereoscopic revolution, also foresaw public exhibitions. He was inspired by the "beautiful combination of lenticular stereoscopes, which was exhibited by Mr. Claudet, Mr. Williams, and others, in the Paris Exhibition [of 1855], and into which six or eight persons were looking at the same time."[48] Brewster envisioned a model for public exhibitions: "Were these *sixty* views [of Rome, by the London Stereoscopic Company] placed on the sides of a revolving polygon, with a stereoscope before each of its faces, a score of persons might, in the course of an hour, see more of Rome, and see it better, than if they had visited it in person."[49] Unwittingly or not, Brewster's imaginary apparatus harked back to Zahn's proposal for the "hexagonal catoptric machine."

Leaping from imagination to reality, similar devices soon appeared on the exhibition circuit. By 1866 the Bohemian showman Alois Polanecky (1826–1911) was touring Continental Europe with his Glas-Stereogramm-Salon, which he had obtained from France.[50] It was a wooden cylindrical structure that had seats for twenty-five spectators around its perimeter. A program of fifty glass stereoviews rotated step by step inside the cylinder, powered by a clockwork mechanism. The high-quality views were produced by the best French manufacturers such as Ferrier. Their sharpness and translucency must have been essential as a selling point, because the "stereoscomania" was also spreading to the homes of the bourgeoisie. Most

private users had to be content with lower-quality albumen views pasted on cardboard.

Polanecky's device may have influenced a better-known apparatus with a very similar design, August Fuhrmann's (1844–1925) Kaiser-Panorama. Fuhrmann, whose early ventures included touring exhibitions of dissolving views and mechanical music, first exhibited his creation in Breslau (Wroclaw) in 1880.[51] What made all the difference was the mode of exhibition he devised. While Polanecky kept touring with his apparatus for the rest of his long life – in keeping with centuries-old traditions of itinerant showmanship – Fuhrmann opened offices and the central Kaiser-Panorama showroom in the fashionable Passage on Unter den Linden in Berlin already in 1883.[52] He concentrated on selling permanent Kaiser-Panorama apparatuses to cities all around Central Europe.[53] A vast network of exhibitors and an effective distribution system that allowed them to present new programs every week guaranteed a long-term success.

Figure 2.3 A rare stereoscopic postcard displaying both the exterior and the interior of a Kaiser-Panorama. The two stereoviews are probably meant to be cut out and viewed with a stereoscope. German, ca. 1890. Author's collection.



At its peak the Kaiser-Panorama network had no less than 250 filials and a massive stock of delicately hand-colored glass stereoviews arranged into fifty-slide programs and stored in sturdy transportation crates.[54] The business continued even after film had made its breakthrough and created its own exhibition and distribution networks. Anticipating many early film shows, the slides were arranged as travelogues – every program had a common theme. The spectators sat on stools for half an hour, their eyes glued to the stereoscopic eyepieces. The journey was continuous, but circular: one could join at any point. Although the Kaiser-Panorama establishments recall Cosmorama Rooms, thanks to its organization Fuhrmann's enterprise represented a new stage in the institutionalization of peep media, and media culture at large.

Similar highly centralized media networks did not yet exist in the United States. Beginning in 1890, the business of exhibiting Edison's automatic "nickel-in-the-slot phonographs" at public phonograph parlors took a step in a similar direction. The idea of the phonograph parlor may have been motivated by practical concerns – collecting several devices in the same premises offered the customers more variety and increased revenue. A phonograph manual emphasized "the attention which can be extended to customers and which customers like to receive, the more social and agreeable surroundings that such a place affords, and the opportunity given to women and children to hear the Phonograph."[55] This, however, was essentially the Cosmorama model. Indeed, it could be suggested that the customers were aurally peeping at the tunes on offer by means of individual listening tubes.

Similarities with the Cosmorama became even stronger when peephole Kinetoscopes began to be exploited in public parlors in 1894 (often together with automatic phonographs). According to Ray Phillips, the Kinetoscopes used in such settings were usually not coin-operated; customers bought tickets from counters, and attendants started and stopped the machines for them.[56] Moving one's body from one peephole to another was another similarity with the Cosmorama experience. The analogy should not be extended too far. The Cosmorama was a novelty picture gallery for the urban bourgeoisie. Its attraction value had relatively little to do with its technology. Although its audiences expanded as the century progressed, it never became fully democratic. In 1857 the admission price to the Regent Street Cosmorama was still one shilling, the same – considerable – amount that had already been charged in the 1820s.[57] The Kinetoscope parlor looked for a broader clientele. It was more like an extension of the street, easy to walk in and out. The peeper appeared from the crowd and disappeared in it again.

Between Peep Practice and Screen Practice

Coin-operated versions of the Kinetoscope were placed in department stores, drug stores, hotel lobbies, barrooms, and other locations.[58] They were part of a powerful surge in the popularity of coin-in-the-slot machinery that began in the 1880s, and also led to the introduction of many other types of coin-operated peep viewers, such as public cabinet stereoscopes.[59] Whereas the motorized Kinetoscope limited both the user's physical intervention and the viewing time, other devices provided somewhat more interactive experiences.[60] A good example is the Mutoscope, introduced in 1897. Two technical solutions – partly dictated by an effort to avoid infringing on Edison's Kinetoscope patent – distinguished it from the Kinetoscope: celluloid film was replaced by a reel of flip cards, and the electric motor with a hand crank. The machines were sturdy and required little maintenance.

Hand-cranking added a tactile element, reminiscent of the ways in which optical toys such as the Zoetrope were used. The user's active role was a deliberate choice, as the *American Amateur Photographer* explained: "In the operation of the mutoscope the spectator has the performance entirely under his own control by turning a crank which is placed conveniently to hand. He may make the operation as quick or as slow as fancy dictates, or he may maintain the normal speed at which the original performance took place, and if desired he can stop the machine at any particular picture and inspect it at leisure."[61] Cranking backward was technically possible, but it was disabled; calculating how much experience a coin should buy had always been part of the showman's mathematics.[62] Edison's peephole Kinetoscope may seem superior in this sense, but the possibilities of slowing down the speed and admiring single frames may have been meant to strengthen the bond between the user and the device – an issue all arcade game developers are familiar with.

The emergence of film projection led to interesting hybrids between peep practice and screen practice. C. Francis Jenkins' "Slot-Action Cabinet" Phantoscope, which was installed in an entertainment parlor at Atlantic City's Boardwalk in 1896, consisted of a large cabinet, said to be "18 feet front and 12 feet deep."[63] It had a row of twelve peep-sights on its front wall – a sight evoking the design of the Cosmorama. The cabinet itself had

been divided into three sections, each containing a projection screen of 6 × 8 feet. Three projectors, which the inventor claimed were “entirely automatic throughout” and activated for forty-second periods by a coin, “threw life-sized pictures” onto the screens from behind the cabinet. The attraction was exhibited with Columbia Phonograph Company’s automatic-phonographs and peephole Kinetoscopes. This combination was not unique: Thomas L. Tally’s parlor in Los Angeles had a similar arrangement, allowing visitors to peep at Vitascope projections through holes at the back of a room containing automatic phonographs, Kinetoscopes, and Mutoscopes.[64]

Another kind of hybrid was the Street Cinematograph, or Outdoor Theatre, patented in 1898 by the British magic lantern manufacturer W. C. Hughes.[65] It was touted as late as 1907 as the “Greatest Money-Maker of the Nineteenth Century.” The device resembled the large street peep shows of the past, but contained a Hughes Photo-Rotoscope 35 mm projector throwing films on a screen. They were peeped at by as many as twenty spectators through slots arranged in two rows on the sides and at one end of the cabinet.[66] Hughes even advertised a “Duplex” version for no less than forty peepers. The pictures were said to be “12 times as large as the slot machines,” and the apparatus was recommended for “Markets, Fairs, Seaside, Bazaars, &c.”[67] How widely such street cinematographs were used is unknown, but they were transitional devices rather than long-term solutions.

Mainstream film culture chose projection for an audience in an auditorium as its primary mode of exhibition. There was no need for peepholes in a movie palace (although psychoanalytic film theories have treated cinema spectatorship itself as a voyeuristic experience). Peep practice, however, did not disappear. Public peep media persisted in amusement arcades, seaside piers, and public venues like railway stations, thanks to the long-lasting popularity of coin-operated 3D viewers and the Mutoscope. Outside the Western world, itinerant peep practices were widespread in the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth. Peep shows are known in North Africa, Syria, India, China, Japan, and elsewhere. Their basic apparatuses are often remarkably similar, although

their external designs reflect local traditions. The cross-cultural trajectories of peep media are not yet fully understood, but peep shows may have spread from the West to other cultural environments through political and trade relations.[68]

Conclusion: From Peep Media to Mediated Voyeurism

As stated at the outset, this chapter has not tried to cover everything there is to say about peep practice. Two omissions are obvious: little has been said about the things that have been peeped at, or about the social impact of peep media, including their relationship to issues such as gender and age. It may seem surprising that the issue of eroticism has been raised only tangentially. After all, it is the theme that is most readily associated with peep shows in today's popular consciousness. The very term has come to connote pornography and secret, titillating pleasures provided by visual and literary representations and living beings alike.[69]

It could be claimed that peeping itself implies eroticism, but explicitly erotic scenes don't seem to have been used very often in the devices discussed in this chapter. Virtual travel and optical surprises were arguably more central. The hundreds of moving picture reels produced for Kinora, a domestic peep viewer that was popular in the early twentieth century, contain travelogues, actualities, magic shows, and other topics also seen at nickelodeons, but erotic subjects are rare.[70] The secretive (and often illegal) nature of erotic representations is of course a problem for the researcher – much has disappeared or been destroyed. We don't know the extent to which such imagery may have been used in eighteenth-century peep practices. The invention of photography and stereoscopy certainly gave a strong impetus for pornography, in spite (or because) of the repressive nature of Victorian society. Kinetoscope and Mutoscope exhibitors did their best to recruit eroticism, however tame, as an

attraction.[71] The Mutoscope's public reputation raised debate about the moral effects of peep media.[72]

Clay Calvert's *Voyeur Nation: Media, Privacy, and Peering in Modern Culture* demonstrates to what extent peeping permeates contemporary media culture. Calvert finds "mediated voyeurism everywhere" – in reality television, televised politics, "upskirt" incidents, video surveillance, and webcam use, raising their social, political, and legal ramifications.[73] The Internet in particular has turned into an all-encompassing peep medium, where a credit card gives the user much more power to open peepholes than a coin in the past. It would be an important challenge for media studies to investigate how current peep media are related to those of the past. A word of warning, though: as the notes on peeping and eroticism made above demonstrate, it is necessary to avoid projecting our own obsessions –- including erotic ones – onto the past. Discovering our own self-image in the peepholes of history would be an anti-climax, and worse: a falsification.

Notes

1 Charles Musser, "Toward a History of Screen Practice," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9, no. 1 (1984): 59.

2 Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). The first part of the chapter has been taken almost verbatim from the 1984 article. The expression "modern motion pictures" appears on page 55.

3 Ibid., 22. This observation was not yet included in the 1984 article. Musser erroneously calls the parastatic microscope "magia catoptrica."

4 See my "Natural Magic: A Short Cultural History of Moving Images," in *The Routledge Companion to Film History*, ed. William Guynn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 3–15.

5 Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900: An Annotated Bibliography* (Gemona/Washington, DC: Le Giornate del Cinema Muto/Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 19.

6 I coined the notion "peep media" in "The Pleasures of the Peephole: An Archaeological Exploration of Peep Media," in *Book of Imaginary Media:*

Excavating the Dream of the Ultimate Communication Medium, ed. Eric Kluitenberg (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2006), 74–155.

7 In the interest of space, I have excluded scientific instruments like telescopes and microscopes from my discussion, although they also embodied the peeping principle.

8 Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 167–86.

9 John P. Van De Geer and Peter J. A. De Natris, "Dutch Distorted Rooms from the Seventeenth Century," *Acta Psychologica* 20 (1962): 101–3.

10 Distorted perspective was also used in the anamorphosis, the art of hidden and distorted image. See Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *Anamorphic Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977).

11 Paula Findlen, "Scientific Spectacle in Baroque Rome: Athanasius Kircher and the Roman College Museum," in *Jesuit Science and the Republic of Letters*, ed. Mordechai Feingold (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 247.

12 Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol. 7 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 272.

13 Ingrid D. Rowland, *The Ecstatic Journey: Athanasius Kircher in Baroque Rome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 2000), 14.

14 Sir David Brewster's "invention" of the Kaleidoscope in the early nineteenth century derived from the tradition of natural magic. See "Description of the Patent Kaleidoscope, invented by Dr Brewster," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 3, no. 14 (1818): 122.

15 Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *Le miroir* (Paris: Elmayan/Le Seuil, 1978), 32–3.

16 Ibid., 30–2.

17 Findlen, "Scientific Spectacle," 262. For Descartes's remark, see editor's introduction in Paula Findlen, ed., *Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 22.

18 Wanda Strauven, "Introduction to an Attractive Concept," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 11–27.

19 Jonathan Crary, “Géricault, the Panorama, and Sites of Reality in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Grey Room* 9 (2002): 5–25.

20 Ibid., 7–9.

21 Ibid.

22 See the chapter on street peep shows (“L’optique”) in Un Archéologue [pseud.], *Les grotesques. Fragments de la vie nomade* (Paris: P. Baudouin, 1838), 121–31. The book discusses street entertainments in Paris.

23 Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

24 Frick Collection, repr. in *Il Mondo nuovo: Le meraviglie della visione dal ’700 alla nascita del cinema*, ed. Carlo Alberto Zotti Minici (Turin: Mazzotta, 1988), 24.

25 Richard Balzer, *Peepshows: A Visual History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 21. Balzer refers to Karl G. Hulten, “A Peep Show by Carel Fabritius,” *The Art Quarterly* 15 (1952): 278–90.

26 Laurent Mannoni, *Le grand art de la lumière et de l’ombre. Archéologie du cinéma* (Paris: Nathan, 1994), 91.

27 *The Philosophical Principles of the Zoetrope, or Wheel of Life* (Springfield: Milton Bradley [post 1866]).

28 Morley Adams, ed., *The Boy’s Own Book of Indoor Games and Recreations: An Instructive Manual of Home Amusements* (London: “The Boy’s Own Paper” Office, n.d.), 121–8.

29 Stereoscopic pornography was also widespread, but seems to have had a more exclusive and secretive character. The same may be true of the eighteenth-century erotic peep media. There is mostly indirect evidence, such as obscene prints of showmen exhibiting their exposed private parts inside their boxes. I have never seen erotic *vues d’optique*. Of course, they may have existed.

30 Auerbach suggests that the word “cosmorama” was coined by the touring showmen Pierre and Gabriel who were active already ca. 1780. See Alfred Auerbach, *Panorama und Diorama: Ein Abriss ueber Geschichte und Wesen volkstuemlicher Wirklichkeitskunst*, Part 1 (Grimmen: Buchdruckerei u. Verlag Alfred Waberg, 1942), 21.

31 At Palais-Royal Séraphin presented not only *ombres chinoises*, but also “des feux arabesques d’un nouveau genre et des tableaux transparents où

se passent des scènes nouvelles et amusantes." See L. V. Thiery, *Guide des amateurs et des étrangers voyageurs à Paris* (Paris: Hardouin et Gattey, 1787), 285. *Feux arabesques* or *feux pyriques* were transparent prints animated by moving lights from behind.

32 Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 69; Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), 211; and Donata Pesenti Campagnoni, *Verso il cinema: Macchine spettacoli e mirabili visioni* (Turin: UTET Libreria, 1995), 87, are among the handful of scholars who have mentioned Abbé Gazzera's Cosmorama.

33 James Hardie, *The Description of the City of New York* (New York: Samuel Marks, 1827), 343–4; *Bowen's Picture of Boston, or the Citizen's and Stranger's Guide* (Boston: Abel Bowen, 1829), 194–5.

34 See Peter Laub, ed., *Kosmoramen von Hubert Sattler*, vol. 1, *Metropolen* (Salzburg: Salzburger Museum Carolino Augusteum, 2006).

35 At Gazzera's Cosmorama, the size of the paintings was 113 × 81 cm during the first fifteen years, and that of the lenses 18 × 22 cm. The size of the paintings was then increased to 211 × 130 cm, and that of the lenses to 27 × 32 cm. See Arthur Pougin, *Le dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s'y rattachent* (Paris: Librairie de Firmin-Didot, 1885), 244.

36 *Cosmorama, ou Voyage historique, géographique et pittoresque dans les différents parties du monde* (Paris: Établissement du Cosmorama, 1824–7). This book is reviewed in *Revue encyclopédique, ou analyses et annonces raisonnées des productions les plus remarquables dans la littérature, les sciences et les arts* 37 (1828): 798–9.

37 Royal Cosmorama, base of the wrapping shaft, Thames Tunnel, broadside, 1848 (John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford). The Cosmorama's influence was evident in Jehoshaphat Aspin's book *Cosmorama; a View of The Costumes and Peculiarities of All Nations* (London: J. Harris, 1828), although it concentrated on "the *people*, not the *place*" (2).

38 Peter Hervé and M. Galignani, *The New Picture of Paris, from the Latest Observations* (London: Sherwood, Gibert, and Piper, 1829), 407.

39 *The Edinburgh Literary Journal; or, Weekly Register of Criticism and Belles Lettres* (June–December 1829): 264.

40 At the Cosmorama the paintings were placed, as at the Diorama, at the end of a (short) tunnel so that their edges were hidden from view. The painting seemed to continue indefinitely beyond the field of vision. The source of light was also hidden.

41 "Cosmorama, Regent-Street," *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* 98 (1828): 449.

42 Neil Arnott, *Elements of Physics, or Natural Philosophy* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1829), 280.

43 Ibid.

44 Lady Morgan, *France in 1829–30*, vol. 1 (London: Saunders and Otley, 1830), 515.

45 M. de Bresnel, *Dictionnaire de technologie étymologie et définition*, vol. 1 (Petit-Montrouge: J.-P. Migne, 1857), 658; Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique*, 244. It would be interesting to know if any of Gazzera's Cosmorama's paintings survived after the institution closed its doors in September 1832.

46 Based on Cosmorama broadsides in the John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

47 Martin Quickley, Jr., *Magic Shadows: The Story of the Origin of Motion Pictures* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1948), 111. No source has been identified, but later writers have accepted this as a fact. The Cosmoramic Stereoscope is not mentioned in Paul Wing's extensive *Stereoscopes: The First One Hundred Years* (Nashua: Transition Publishing, 1996), although a British device for parlor use, Knight's Cosmorama Stereoscope, is well known.

48 David Brewster, *The Stereoscope: Its History, Theory, and Construction* (London: John Murray, 1856), 163–4.

49 Ibid., 164.

50 Ernst Kieninger and Doris Rauschgatt, *Die Mobilisierung des Blicks* (Vienna: PVS Verleger, 1996), 51–2; Doris Rauschgatt, "Alois Polanecky (1826–1911): Der Pionier des Kaiserpanoramas and sein 'Glas-Stereogramm-Salon,'" *Fotogeschichte* 72, no. 19 (1999): 15–28. Rauschgatt also mentions Brewster's suggestion.

51 Fuhrmann wrote about his early showmanship in “Aus meiner Nebelbildarbeit,” *Der Bildwart: Blätter fuer Volksbildung* 3, no. 4 (1925): 305–8. Quoted in Kieninger and Rauschgatt, *Die Mobilisierung des Blicks*, 52.

52 Although self-serving, the main source is *Goldenes Buch der Zentrale für Kaiser Panoramen Berlin-W., Passage* (Berlin: A. Fuhrmann, ca. 1910), a huge collection of letters, testimonies, and articles.

53 Some were occasionally moved from place to place. See Bernd Poch, “Das Kaiserpanorama: Das Medium, seine Vorgänger und seine Verbreitung in Nordwestdeutschland,” online at www.massenmedien.de/kaiserpanorama/emden/emden.htm. A smaller model for only eight spectators also existed. See *Berlin um 1900. Das Kaiserpanorama: Bilder aus dem Berlin der Jahrhundertwende* (Berlin: Berliner Festspiele, 1984), 44.

54 Kieninger and Rauschgatt, *Die Mobilisierung des Blicks*, 52–8; Karsten Hälbig, *Das Kaiser-Panorama filiale von Berlin in Celle von 1907–1930* (Celle: Schriftenreihe des Stadtarchivs Celle und des Bomann-Museums, 1992).

55 George E. Tewksbury, *A Complete Manual of the Edison Phonograph* (Newark: US Phonograph Company, 1897), 57.

56 Ray Phillips, *Edison’s Kinetoscope and Its Films: A History to 1896* (Trowbridge, Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1997), 61–3.

57 According to broadsides in the John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

58 Gordon Hendricks, *The Kinetoscope* (New York: The Beginnings of the American Film, 1966), 65.

59 *La Nature* published numerous articles on such devices. For an example, see *La Nature* 17, no. 812 (December 22, 1888): 53–4. For background, see Nic Costa, *Automatic Pleasures: The History of the Coin Machine* (London: Kevin Francis Publishing, 1988), 192–9.

60 See Erkki Huhtamo, “Slots of Fun, Slots of Trouble: Toward an Archaeology of Arcade Gaming,” in *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*, eds. Joost Raessens and Jeffrey Goldstein (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 3–21.

61 *American Amateur Photographer* 9 (1897): 219.

62 William Kennedy Laurie Dickson, one of the inventors of the Mutoscope (and the Kinetoscope), confirmed that the mechanism could be run backward. See Gordon Hendricks, *Beginnings of the Biograph* (New York: The Beginnings of the American Film, 1964), 64.

63 Charles Francis Jenkins, *Animated Pictures* (Washington, DC: C. Francis Jenkins, 1898), 37–9. Already in 1894 Jenkins wrote to *Photographic Times* about his Phantoscope experiments, claiming that "the pictures are reproduced in an optical lantern upon any size screen." He intended to bring out "a nickel in the slot modification of the instrument." *Photographic Times* 25, no. 668 (July 6, 1894): 2–3. The 1896 device, about which I have found no independent descriptions, combined these ideas. As a photograph reproduced by both Jenkins (p. 38) and Musser (*Emergence of Cinema*, 161) demonstrates, the films were *Boxing Contest*, *Sandow Muscular Posing*, and *Ruth Dennis Champion High Kicker*. Were they Edison's? Both Sandow and Ruth Dennis posed for the Kinetograph in 1894 (Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 90–2, 105–6).

64 Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights* (1926; repr., New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 277–8 and ill. following p. 426.

65 Patent BP No. 6724, March 19, 1898. See Hermann Hecht, *Pre-Cinema History: An Encyclopaedia and Annotated Bibliography of the Moving Image Before 1896*, ed. Ann Hecht (London: Bowker-Saur with British Film Institute, 1993), entry 438 C, 304.

66 Deac Rossell fails to mention the four peepholes at the end in *Living Pictures: The Origins of the Movies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 153. The Street Cinematograph was also advertised in Cecil M. Hepworth, *Animated Photography: The ABC of the Cinematograph*, 2nd ed. (London: Hazell, Watson & Viney, 1900), 128.

67 Advertisement, *Review of Reviews* 36, no. 211 (1907): 100.

68 See my "Intercultural Interfaces: Correcting the pro-Western Bias of Media History" (2007), online at http://193.171.60.44/dspace/bitstream/10002/441/4/huhtamo.pdf. Timon Screech, in *The Lens Within the Heart: The Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), discusses peep shows in Edo-era Japan.

69 Amy Herzog, “In the Flesh: Space and Embodiment in the Pornographic Peep Show Arcade,” *Velvet Light Trap* 62 (Fall 2008): 29–43. Such “cabinets” now also exist on the Internet, where women pose for clients using webcams. Linda Williams has discussed the relationship between media and pornography in “Corporealized Observers: Visual Pornographies and the ‘Carnal Density of Vision,’” in *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video*, ed. Patrice Petro (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 15–19. The device in Figures 9, 10, and 11 is not a Mutoscope (19).

70 Barry Anthony, *The Kinora: Motion Pictures for the Home 1896–1914* (London: The Projection Box, 1996). Kinora can be characterized as either a miniature Kinetoscope or Mutoscope, depending on the model – some were automatic (clockwork-operated), while most were hand-cranked.

71 Musser provides an interesting analysis of the homosocial space of the programming and exhibition practices of Edison’s peephole Kinetoscope in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 33–43.

72 A detailed peek into early Mutoscope exhibitions is a debate in the Parliament of Great Britain in 1901, in *The Parliamentary Debates*, Fourth Series, vol. 98, Tenth Volume of Session, 1901 (London: Wyman and Sons), 1303–11. See also Dan Streible, “Children at the Mutoscope,” *Cinémas* 14, no. 1 (2003): 91–116.

73 Clay Calvert, *Voyeur Nation: Media, Privacy, and Peering in Modern Culture* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 35.

3

“We are Here and Not Here”

Late Nineteenth-Century Stage Magic and the Roots of Cinema in the Appearance (and Disappearance) of the Virtual Image

Tom Gunning

Ever since Georges Méliès greeted a preview of the Lumière Cinématographe with a cry of recognition, the filiation between cinema, especially early cinema, and magic has been acknowledged.[1] At the turn of the century, cinema belonged simultaneously to a number of cultural series, from the scientific realm of photographic novelties, the entertainment world of visual spectacles, and the technological realm of mechanical marvels.[2] In an era where popular displays of magic also displayed a host of cultural associations: from residue of ancient superstition to the modern attraction of spiritualism (spook shows), from exoticism (Indian and Chinese conjurors) to the frontiers of science (X-rays and claims of dematerialized disappearances), cinema and magic pursued similar pathways, and even merged. Méliès presented projections of motion pictures during scene changes for his magic spectacles at the Théâtre Robert-Houdin, just as the original Robert-Houdin had exhibited his mechanical automatons some decades before. The grand compendium of magic by Albert Hopkins, *Magic: Stage Illusions, Scientific Diversion and Trick Photography*, published in 1898, included several chapters explaining the workings of motion pictures. Indeed, a common term for motion pictures from this period, “animated pictures,” had been previously used for a variety of

magic tricks and carried the connotation that the film itself depended upon a magical device.[3]

The common ground between magic and cinema, however, goes deeper than the shared culture of popular entertainments of the late nineteenth century and its fascination with science and technology. Stage magic, although it has many forms including the acoustic, aims especially to fool the eye, to make one see things that one can't believe. While this fascination has deep anthropological roots, the spectacularization of magic in the latter half of the nineteenth century increased magic's address to the eye and sought out all the tricks it could play on human vision. With new technology of light and glass, late nineteenth-century stage magic entered into an imagistic era, in which the elaborate visual presentation that had been developing since the phantasmagoria of the late eighteenth century became dominant. Magic performances and cinema were converging even before the trick films of Méliès and others which used the cinema to translate to the screen the disappearances and transformations that formed the center of the magic theater. This chapter seeks to trace not only the visual tradition of late nineteenth-century magic, but what I might call its "imagistic turn." Just before the appearance of cinema, magic theater sketched out methods of transformation and metamorphosis, or appearance and disappearance, through a new use of mirrors and reflections. I claim that this new intertwining of the visible with the invisible inaugurated the modern era of virtual images on which the medium of moving images, from early cinema to contemporary digital images, depends. At the end of the nineteenth century both magic theater and the cinema redefined the nature of vision through control of the spectator's view and the production of virtual images.

This chapter does not simply seek to add magic illusions to the genealogy of pre-cinema. Too often such genealogies have simply proposed a succession of technological innovations, implying a teleology of progress toward the invention of cinema. Rather, I hope to draw awareness of cinema scholars to the *longue durée* of visual media, and to the complex dance among technology, spectatorship, and visual imagery that came into sharp focus at the end of the nineteenth century.

I have argued that film studies should recognize its relation to what I have called “cultural optics,” acknowledging the complex role optical images play in modern culture. My plea comes in the context of the dominant theoretical influences of much of recent critical studies of what Martin Jay has called “the denigration of vision”: a suspicion of vision as an image of truth, of sight as a condition of knowledge.[4] However, simply to reverse this attitude by valorizing vision would be naive. The investigation of what we could term “cultural optics” consists less of valorizing vision than exploring its dialectical nature within modern technology and culture, a dialectic deeply evident in the practices of popular visual culture. Although the term “visual language” can pose a rather awkward oxymoron, I do believe that there exists a rhetoric of vision, a cultural practice that plays with (rather than simply assumes the power of) sight, highlighting its aporia as well as insights, while exploring its range of uses and entertainments. It is on this field that magic and cinema encounter each other, as new practices of the virtual image appear long before they become theoretically explored.

I am dealing in this chapter with magical entertainments, which have generally been understood to be trivial. Entertainment magic plays with vision, causing us great pleasure when it is well done. But this play confronts fundamental issues in the dialectic of vision, confronting what we see with what we don’t see, and making us wonder how sight relates to knowledge. Developed over centuries, magic has a history, interacting with changes in technology and acting as a harbinger of cultural transformations. Magic works through and on vision, not simply by being a spectacle, but by playing with the capacity and habits of human sight. The seminal early modern discourse on magic, Reginald Scot’s *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* from 1584, initiated a new approach to the topic by separating witchcraft (whose existence Scot doubted, other than as the residue of superstition and the product of mental delusion) from what he called “juggling,” an entertaining practice dependent on manual agility and specially constructed devices. Scot believed this form of magic deserved condemnation only if it falsely claimed supernatural agency and intended to deceive its audience. However, Scot claimed, if “jugglers confesse in the end that these are no supernatural actions but the devises of men,” then these actions can be

performed without fault “to the delight of the beholder.”[5] While for centuries “juggling” was a synonym for conjuring, to the modern ear the word refers more narrowly to the manual manipulation of objects. Scot’s definition of juggling encompasses both this modern understanding and the practice that in the nineteenth century became known as “prestidigitation”: “the true art of juggling consisteth of legiermaine: too wit the nimble conveiance of the hand.”[6] But this manual (and tactile) performance aims, as Scot makes clear, at having a visual effect: “These feats are nimbly, cleanly & swiftly to be conveid; so as the eies of the beholders may not discerne or dereive the drift.”[7]

Almost two centuries later, the most influential French conjurer of the nineteenth century, Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin, still made a connection between the performance of magic and juggling, if only as a training exercise: “It is well known that the trick with the balls wonderfully improves the touch, but does it not improve the vision at the same time? In fact, when a juggler throws into the air four balls crossing each other in various directions, he requires an extraordinary power of sight to follow the direction his hands have given to each of the balls.”[8]

The conjurer’s art derived from his visual, as much as manual, power and acuity. Conversely, it also depended on the weakness of the spectator’s visual control, a lack of discipline the conjurer not only exploited, but also manipulated by a variety of devices of misdirection. As Scot observed, “jugglers … speak certain strange words of course to lead awaie the eie from espeing the maner of their conveneiance.”[9] Robert-Houdin in his highly fictional account of his own initiation into the magical arts by a magician named Torrini claimed that his mentor had picked him out from a crowd of spectators during his performance: “Thus when I indulged in some amusing paradox, to draw public attention away from the side where the trick was to be performed, you alone escaped the snare, and fixed your eyes on the right spot.”[10]

Directing the gaze, knowing where to look, understanding the nature of visual attention, issues so familiar from discussions of cinema spectatorship, these visual traits also form the tools of the trade of the conjurer, as much as his cup and balls or magical cabinets. From the hand-

held devices manipulated by a magician to the elaborate stage mechanisms that appeared toward the end of the nineteenth century, all of these could be considered optical devices, means of directing or misdirecting vision. In the nineteenth century, discussions of magic focused more systematically on optics. The classic account of magic from the viewpoint of technology and science, David Brewster's *Letters on Natural Magic* from 1832, which intends to explain the "prodigies of the natural world," declares in its first letter: "But of all the sciences *Optics* is the most fertile in marvelous expedients."[11] Brewster approached the optical side of magic more systematically than earlier writers, and his second letter opened his discussion with a diagram of the physiology of the human eye, claiming: "Of all the organs by which we acquire a knowledge of external nature the eye is the most remarkable and most important."[12] Brewster locates the effect of illusions not only in directing of gaze, but in the physical nature of the eye, its mechanism of pupil and retina and optic nerve, its response to light and color, its blind spots and retention of afterimages. For Brewster, there are "illusions which have their origin in the eye."[13] (Interestingly, although it may not bear a direct connection to any of his actual illusions, Robert-Houdin actually invented the iridioscope, a medical instrument that allowed examination of the neural structure of the eye.)[14] Brewster in fact was probably the first writer to use the term "virtual image" to describe the image produced by a concave mirror that appears to float in the air unsupported. Late nineteenth-century stage magic increasingly made use of virtual images whose materiality remained mysterious to the spectator. The flowering of magic as a modern, international, highly popular, and highly technological entertainment in this era came largely through understanding itself as an optical art, based in a knowledge of human eyesight, a calculation of the possibilities of various optical devices and principles (light, reflection, refractions, virtual images), and a showman's deeply pragmatic knowledge of how people react to what they see (or think they see).

Most historians of magic agree that a new era of optical magic emerged in 1862 with Henry Dircks and John Henry Pepper's illusion that became known as "Pepper's Ghost." A pane of transparent glass, which emerged

from slots in the stage and could be lowered away as needed, appeared between audience and actors. This glass was angled so that it caught the reflection of a highly illuminated figure (usually an actor) from an area not visible to the audience. From the audience's point of view (and in the optical magic theater the control of audience sightlines played an essential role) the transparent glass itself remained invisible, while the reflected figure appeared brightly, a virtual image superimposed on the stage scene behind the glass. The illusion premiered at the Royal Polytechnic Institute where its enormous success reportedly earned £12,000 for the venue, besides being licensed to theaters and music halls as a special effect in other performances.[15] Historian of magic Sidney W. Clark claimed that this illusion "first brought home the immense possibilities of glass, plain or silvered, in the production of magic illusions."[16] More recently Jim Steinmeyer has added, "'Pepper's Ghost' represented a new category of illusion: optical conjuring."[17] Thus, as arts employing virtual images, cinema and magic move toward an intersection.

We need to recognize both the heritage and the originality of "Pepper's Ghost." I am not primarily interested in tracing the devices that directly preceded the illusion's technical design, such as Pierre Sequin's Polyoscope, nor in individual claims of invention, but want to place the device within a tradition of virtual images that extends back to the seventeenth century. If conjuring has always been a craft of control of vision what makes "Pepper's Ghost" so important? The immediate answer lies not only in its heightened control of the audience's visual experience, but in the construction of an apparatus that allows this control, the complex of reflection on glass in relation to the concealed "other scene," the space below the stage where the highly illuminated figure (visible to the audience only in reflection) actually is placed. This apparatus employs, as Clark observed, glass as an optical device.

Glass, especially in the form of mirrors, had long been associated with magic. The pioneer of optical magic, Giambattista della Porta, described a similar arrangement of mirror reflections in his 1554 encyclopedic discussion of optical devices, *Natural Magic*.[18] Porta's and Athanasius Kircher's works on natural magic around the turn of the seventeenth

century contained elaborate discussions of catoptrical theaters that arranged mirror reflection to produce fantastic virtual images. Scot's *Discoverie* also described magical optical effects obtained by mirrors, claiming, "But the woonderous devises, and miraculous sights and conceipts made and contained in glass doo fare exceed all other; wherein the art of perspective is verie necessarie."[19] Scot's description of the magic of glass demonstrates his threshold position between ancient traditions of magic mirrors and the modern understanding of the mirror illusion as related to the art of perspective and optics. He makes a survey of "diverse glasses," inventorying at first the various shapes and methods of making mirrors ("the hallow, the plaine, the embossed, the columnaire, the pyramidate or piked, the turbinall, the bounched, the round, the cornered, the inverse, the eversed, the massie, the regular, the irregular, the colored and clear glasses"). But then he lists the magical possibilities that these mirrors can achieve:

> what image or favour soever you shall print in your imagination, you shall think you see the same therein. Others are so framed, as therein you may see what others doo in places far distant; others whereby you shall see men hanging in the aire; others whereby you may see men flieng in the aire; others wherein you may see one coming & another going; others where one image shall seem to be a hundred &c. There be glasses also wherein one man may see another man's image, and not his own; others to make manie similitudes; others to make none at all … others that represent not the image received within them but cast them off in the aire, appearing like airie images … There be clear glasses that make thing seem little, things farre off to be at hand, and that which is neer, to be farre off.[20]

In this delightful jumble one can recognize certain optical properties of lenses and mirrors that are familiar to us. Others, while their descriptions may be misleading, seem to belong entirely to the realm of the miraculous.

Centuries later Brewster, the creator himself of optical devices such as the kaleidoscope and a stereoscope, attributed many seemingly miraculous apparitions to the powers of optics, especially the concave mirror with its virtual inverted image, which "to a spectator rightly placed, appears suspended in the air, so that if the mirror and the object are hid from his

view, the effect must appear to him almost supernatural."[21] Brewster illustrated an arrangement of mirrors and framing devices limiting the spectator's sightlines that would create an illusion of an apparition likely as strong as "Pepper's Ghost," but hardly more amazing than the catoptric theaters envisioned by Porta and Kircher (and others) centuries before. But in contrast to "Pepper's Ghost" these earlier mirror devices remained paper spectacles described and illustrated in books, theoretical sketches of the possibilities of catoptrics. It is quite possible that some of these were demonstrated for small audiences, but none of them became public attractions like "Pepper's Ghost" with mass audiences.

There are several reasons for this, besides the growth in the nineteenth century of commercial entertainment. First, illusions that work on principle can remain elusive in practice. Up until the end of the seventeenth century the manufacture of mirrors without flaws, able to reflect bright and clear images, or of large dimensions remained a technically difficult process, and even later such mirrors remained quite expensive.[22] Porta fully understood the principles that later underlay Dircks's illusion, but the manufacture of a flawless, smooth, and massive pane of glass would not have been practical until centuries after Porta published his description. The descriptions that appear in the works of Porta and Kircher tended to be ideal and provided allegories of the virtues of light and reflection as images of divine illumination, rather than practical guides to their manufacture. Further, if achieved, even the illusions Brewster described later were limited to a small range of sightlines, basically an illusion devised for a single spectator. These are devices of court magic, designed for a single sovereign viewpoint, not the stuff of the larger audiences of modern commercial entertainment even if magic theater tended to take place in smaller venues than large auditoria used by melodrama and other spectacles. Finally, not only was "Pepper's Ghost" a successful theatrical illusion, it superimposed the world of the virtual image on the recognizable world of flesh and blood. The transparent phantom cast on glass hovered over real actors, moving among them, visible yet immaterial, allowing sword thrusts to pass through its body and seeming to pass through walls and to dissolve into air.

But the realm of optical magic had in fact already produced a popular and influential visual spectacle, the Phantasmagoria. Premiering almost a

century earlier than “Pepper’s Ghost,” the Phantasmagoria brought innovations to an optical device discussed by Kircher in the seventeenth century: the magic lantern. Brewster claimed the invention of the magic lantern had “supplied magicians with one of their most valuable tools.”[23] The lantern projected images painted on glass, rather than reflections of real objects or people. The innovations the Phantasmagoria brought to the traditional lantern show heightened the impact of these images. They included a dramatic use of darkness; concealing the lantern from view behind the screen by using back projection; devising a lantern which could project three-dimensional objects, such as a carved skeleton, as images onto a screen; and, most powerfully, a mobile lantern whose smooth approach to or withdrawal from the screen caused an enlarged or reduced image to appear to suddenly rush, or retreat from, the audience. This effect of emergence terrified spectators. By Brewster’s time the Phantasmagoria had declined in popularity and by the 1860s it existed mainly as a memory (although Dircks originally called his device “the Dircksian Phantasmagoria,” well aware of its link to the earlier form of visual theatrical illusion).[24]

“Pepper’s Ghost” did not depend on the illusion of lunging out at the audience for its effect; its virtual image retained theater’s essential separation between spectator and spectacle. The movement and visual appearance of the virtual wraith carried the uncanny effect of a reflection, rather than a projected image painted on glass (whose flaws were enlarged on projection, as Brewster had noted). Thus the optical innovation of Dircks and Pepper’s illusion maintained an element essential to the Phantasmagoria: placing the viewer in a carefully controlled spectator position that concealed the actual mechanism involved.

The “Ghost” had limited applications to conjuring and mainly developed as a stage device (or as a visual effect, as in Loïe Fuller’s use of glass reflections in her dance performances at the end of the century). For optical conjuring the truly influential illusion came, I think, from a device that absorbed the lesson that “Pepper’s Ghost” demonstrated about the possibilities of modern manufactured glass and mirrors – and *reversed* its principles – Pepper and Thomas Tobin’s 1865 illusion “Proteus, or We are Here and Not Here.” Historian of magic, and creator of illusions in his own

right, Jim Steinmeyer has found a patent for a theatrical device by Joseph Maurice that drew the same lesson from “Pepper’s Ghost”: “It has hitherto been the practice in producing spectral illusions to place the real actor or object out of sight, and to throw a representation or image of such living actor or real object upon a sheet of glass placed on the stage but [I reflect in the] plate of glass the duplicate scene, which may be wall, forest or wainscoting.”[25] This sounds obscure – or pointless – initially, but it offered a brilliant reversal of the use of reflection in “Pepper’s Ghost.” Instead of superimposing a specter on a scene, this device causes the reflection of a scene – a background – to obscure the actor. As Steinmeyer puts it, “Maurice had simply reversed the equation … something could be hidden by the use of a reflection. It was simply, an optical formula for invisibility.”[26]

Magic acts that apply the principles contained in Maurice’s patent gave rise to the familiar phrase, “It’s all done with mirrors.” Whether aware of Maurice’s patent or simply figuring out the optical possibility themselves, Pepper and Tobin applied it publicly in “Proteus.” “Proteus” employed a cabinet with a pair of hinged mirrors inside. The magician opens the cabinet, shows it to be empty, other than a central post supporting a lamp. A boy steps inside, the door is closed and when the magician again opens the door, the cabinet appears to be empty, the boy has disappeared. The trick involved an arrangement of mirrors. When the cabinet was opened initially, the hinged mirrors lay flat against the sides, unnoticeable, their backs reflecting the patterned wallpaper of the actual surrounding walls and indistinguishable from them. When the cabinet door closed, the boy simply pulled the mirrors half-way in, creating a space large enough for him to stand in behind them, concealed from the view of the audience by the mirrors. The two mirrors joined precisely at a 45-degree angle, the central pillar marking the exact point where they had to join and therefore concealing the seam between them. Seen from the front – the viewpoint of the audience – the angled mirrors reflected the wallpaper-covered side walls of the cabinet, so that the reflection looked precisely like the back wall of the cabinet, covered with the same patterned wallpaper. The precisely angled mirror reflections created an illusory depth – apparently revealing an empty space.

Even more than “Pepper’s Ghost,” this illusion, or rather its principle, inspired many of the most famous magic illusions of the nineteenth century. I find this mirror-generated invisibility revolutionary in its optics, a sort of Copernican revolution. Instead of making figures visible, as had previous optical conjuring, the arrangement of mirrors rendered figures invisible by reflecting an illusory ground. Rather than conjuring a spirit, the trick made emptiness visible. Steinmeyer insightfully describes the function of the mirror in this trick: “The nature of mirror viewing is that, unless the mirror is cracked or dirty, the viewer never focuses on the surface of the mirror but focuses through it, to an object that’s being reflected.”[27] As Steinmeyer’s account shows, a succession of illusions appeared using mirrors to generate empty space, an illusion of looking through to a background when, in fact, mirrors concealed a hollow space that served to hide a person (or part of a person). Tobin’s illusion for Colonel Stodare, “Sphinx,” displayed a mystical head perched on top of a three-legged table while beneath the table top, mirrors at 45-degree angles hid the lower part of the head’s body. The “Oracle of Delphi” presented a head that seemed to float in space (actually surrounded by a large mirror angled up at 45 degrees to reflect an unseen ceiling painted to resemble the back wall). John Nevil Maskelyne’s “Enchanted Gorilla Den” complicated “Proteus’s”disappearing act by using even smaller hidden spaces.

Although the optical principle of reflection at 45 degrees (or 90 degrees as in the cage Maskelyne used in “The Will, The Witch and the Watchman”) shows the simplicity of genius, the actual implementation of these mirrored devices remained complex and demanding. The mirrors had to be perfectly made, kept absolutely clean, and carefully lit to avoid flares. Edges and seams must be carefully concealed. Most importantly, the placement of the mirrors in relation to the audience had to be carefully calculated. As Steinmeyer phrases it, audience sightlines “are the battle plans for an illusion, the mathematical proof of a principle, and the formula to make an illusion deceptive.”[28] Mirrors placed without sufficient calculation might reflect the viewers back to themselves, destroying the illusion, or they simply might not reflect the supposed background properly. Further, magicians had to carefully calculate the “safe zone” in each arrangement, an optical phenomenon defining a mathematically calculable,

strictly bounded area in front of the illusion in which the magician can stand without casting his or her reflection into the mirrors and thereby spoiling the illusion. An elaborate calculation of space, based on geometrically defined optical angles of reflection, must be established to cause something to disappear and leave a reflection of … emptiness. Of course, nasty spectators might toss wads of paper and watch them bounce off the glass, if they suspected the mirror's existence.

It is the effect of emptiness I want to linger over, the mirror that itself seems to disappear, a mirror that instead of showing something, seems to display only empty space: the paradoxical effect of a virtual emptiness. From the magician's point of view (and, even more, the audience's) the illusion produces disappearance or invisibility; the virtual emptiness serves mainly as optical misdirection. Magicians have always worked by concealment, with some – usually the most essential – part of the illusion invisible, whether the palming of a card, the hiding of a double, or the concealing of a projector. Invisibility itself also could be achieved acoustically, as in the famous illusion "The Invisible Girl," included at one point in Robertson's Phantasmagoria, in which a voice seemed to issue from a suspended apparatus, which directed attention away from a woman in a concealed compartment in the ceiling who spoke through a concealed speaking tube. Darkness played a role in spiritualist seances, most famously in the public exhibitions of the Davenport Brothers, which influenced modern stage magicians enormously. Darkness, seance practitioners often claimed, was essential in order for the immaterial and basically invisible spirits to manifest themselves. As dramatist Dion Boucicault, manager and publicist for the Davenports, claimed, using an argument spiritualists would often recycle, "Is not a dark chamber essential in the process of photography?" Control of light and a calculated use of darkness became the basis as well of the Black Art, a form of stage magic utilizing black velvet backgrounds and dark costumes that appeared invisible against this background when properly lit, rendering the cloaked figures, or parts of figures, invisible and creating the appearance of floating heads or airborne objects.

Stage magic explores the means of optical deception by exploiting the limits of visual experiences, exploiting its blind spots and ambiguities.

Rather than the schema of an effulgent, evenly lit display of reality and truth, magic, especially in the nineteenth century, sought visual uncertainty. Magic's separation of visual experience from intellectual certainty extends (and perhaps transcends) the dominant tradition in Western metaphysics of doubting the evidence of the senses. Nineteenth-century stage magic evolved within the modern approach to vision described by Jonathan Crary in *Techniques of the Observer*, recognizing sight as physiologically determined and therefore in some sense independent from the exterior world it was supposed to reproduce.[29] Crary emphasizes the modern attempts to control and discipline this vision, following the critique of cultural deception exemplified by rationalist figures like David Brewster, who saw magic and its deceptions as the means by which tyrants "maintain their influence over human mind" in their "dark conspiracy to deceive and enslave the human race."[30] But illusionists in the nineteenth century denied claims of supernatural power (as Howard Thurston, perhaps the greatest American illusionist, would intone, "I wouldn't deceive you for the world," reiterating a theme that goes back at least to Philipstahl's Phantasmagoria). Instead of offering demonstrations of godly power, magicians used the limitations of the eye and the possibility of tricking vision to create new contradictory experiences – amusing and entertaining rather than ideologically deceptive.

While no one would claim that magic illusionists in the nineteenth or twentieth century have been prime movers in the spread of political tyranny (although there are minor episodes, more novelistic than geopolitical in significance, of Western magicians being used in colonialist struggles to awe superstitious natives, such as Robert-Houdin's government-sponsored performances in Algeria to astonish the Marabouts and quell a native uprising).[31] But are the precisely calculated spectacles of virtual emptiness, operating with precision on the spectator's sensorium, part of the disciplining function of audiences that cultural critiques have seen as essential to the function of a modern society of the spectacle? Is magic also the ancestor of cinema's ideological role? I would be loath to deny it absolutely, but equally hesitant to endorse it without reflection. Instead of demonstrations of power or of metaphysical principles, magic illusions seem to open a fissure in our experience of the visual, sowing curiosity and

doubt, entertaining and suspending either belief or disbelief, breaking down perceptual habits, confusing the real and the virtual. In themselves these tricks are neither liberatory revelations nor ideological deceptions. On reflection, however, they have the potential for either use.

I would claim the optical practices of the magic art provide many paths for reflection within the field of cultural optics. Not the least of these lies in rethinking the role of the mirror. As Sabine Melchior-Bonnet has shown in her survey of its history, the mirror constitutes one of the most symbolically loaded objects in our culture.[32] Since the Middle Ages, the mirror has served both as an image of man's relation to Divine light and creation and as the image of man's (and, especially in this sexist tradition, woman's) narcissism and vanity, and ultimately of the inevitability of death (the mirror as image of *vanitas*). In the early modern era the mirror emerged as an image of semblance and surface, especially through its role in fashioning a courtly and later a fashionable self, and of the process of artistic representation. In the nineteenth century especially, the mirror figured the image of the self-conscious individual, obsessed not only with appearance, but with identity. But as we moved into the twentieth century, Melchior-Bonnet claims, the image of the empty mirror, the glass from which one's reflection had vanished, began to proliferate, from Maupassant's terrifying story *The Horla* to Rilke's description of the childhood experience of Malte Laurids Brigge.[33] But my survey of the popular magic stage shows us that this peculiarly modern nightmare had been rehearsed, albeit lightly, first in the illusions of optical conjurers.

In confronting our contemporary culture of endlessly multiplying images, nineteenth-century magic gives us much to reflect upon. Early cinema emerged on the scene within a welter of new images. As Méliès remarked on seeing a preview of the Cinématographe, projected images were familiar, but *moving* projected images offered a novel trick. Yet since "Pepper's Ghost" the display of reflections had already introduced audiences to moving virtual images. The cinema allowed audiences to see things in motion, endowing the virtual image with a high degree of realism. Yet Méliès himself soon found that the cinematic apparatus contained more tricks than just making photographs move. The up-to-date conjurer could use cinema to make things disappear as well as appear. We might recall that

his first use of cinema in the Théâtre Robert-Houdin involved projecting films on a screen in front of his stage while the elaborate sets and machinery needed for his stage illusions were assembled behind them, the mechanics of illusion concealed from view by the cinema itself. For Méliès the cinema initially not only showed things but concealed them as well. The first projections at the Théâtre Robert-Houdin recall the false reflecting mirrors in illusions, which seem to show something, but actually really hide something from view.

Cinema not only emerged in a rich context of virtual images, it interacted with magic's traditions of deceptive and playful images – within a dialectic of the visible and the invisible.

Notes

1 On the history of cinema and magic, see Erik Barnouw's pioneering work *The Magician and the Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) and the recent work by Matthew Solomon, *Disappearing Tricks: Silent Film, Houdini, and the New Magic of the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

2 On the concept of cultural series in relation to early cinema, see André Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction: From Kinematography to Cinema*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

3 The connotation of this term is discussed in Karine Martinez, "Les lexies concurrentes pour 'film' à l'époque du cinéma des premiers temps (approche lexico-historique)" (master's thesis, Université de Montréal, 1999).

4 Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

5 Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584; New York: Dover, 1972), 199.

6 Ibid., 182.

7 Ibid.

8 Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin, *Memoirs*, trans. R. Shelton MacKenzie (Minneapolis: Carl W. Jones Publisher of Magic, 1944), 32.

9 Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 83.

10 Robert-Houdin, *Memoirs*, 51.

11 Sir David Brewster, *Letters on Natural Magic Addressed to Sir Walter Scott* (New York: J. J. Harper, 1832; repr., Whitefish: Kessinger, 2004), 16.

12 Ibid., 19.

13 Ibid., 21.

14 Illustrated in Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 125.

15 Many sources provide a description of "Pepper's Ghost." I found the most useful to be Jim Steinmeyer, *Hiding the Elephant: How Magicians Invented the Impossible and Learned to Disappear* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003), 25–43. I owe a great debt to Steinmeyer's magisterial consideration of vanishing tricks.

16 Quoted in During, *Modern Enchantments*, 143.

17 Steinmeyer, *Hiding the Elephant*, 43.

18 Giambattista della Porta (John Baptista Porta), *Natural Magic* (repr., New York: Basic Books, 1957).

19 Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 179.

20 Ibid.

21 Brewster, *Letters on Natural Magic*, 64.

22 Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror: A History*, trans. Katharine H. Jewett (New York: Routledge, 2001).

23 Brewster, *Letters on Natural Magic*, 77.

24 Steinmeyer, *Hiding the Elephant*, 33.

25 Quoted in Steinmeyer, *Hiding the Elephant*, 77 (his brackets).

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., 79.

28 Ibid., 80.

29 Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

30 Brewster, *Letters on Natural Magic*, 14.

31 Robert-Houdin, *Memoirs*, 393–419.

32 Melchior-Bonnet, *Mirror*.

33 Ibid., 257–9.

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The *Féerie* between Stage and Screen

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In the November 21, 1896 issue of *La Nature* the readers of this popular French scientific journal could learn about a new moving image machine built by Georges Demenÿ.[2] The former assistant of chronophotographer Étienne-Jules Marey was by then working with Léon Gaumont, who had taken over the *Comptoir général de photographie* in July 1895 and was now exploring the commercial possibilities of animated pictures.[3] On page 393 of the article, an illustration showed a group of ballet dancers on "real-size images from a 35-meter-long strip destined to be projected as part of a *féerie* [fairy-play] at the Châtelet theater by means of the Demenÿ Chronophotograph." In the main text the author explained that the strip consists of 1,000 photographs, all of which were hand-colored, and that this produces a very beautiful effect. The article continued with an explanation of how a positive print can be made by using the very same machine that had been employed to record these images. Even though mentioned only in passing in an otherwise rather technical description of the apparatus and its functioning, the event referred to here in the future tense is a remarkable one indeed. Less than a year after the public presentation of the Lumière Cinématographe at the Salon indien on the Boulevard des Capucines in Paris, one of the theaters in the French capital apparently had the intention to project a short strip of film as part of one of its shows.

Almost two decades later, an article by Edmond Floury in *Le courrier cinématographique* commemorated this, as he called it, "first application of the kinematograph in a theater." The author explained that the rapid success of the new medium in many different venues along the Parisian boulevards had pushed the directors of the Châtelet, "always on the look-out for

something original," to bring the "grand novelty of the day" to their theater.[4] This retrospective appreciation becomes even more interesting when one considers that in 1896, at the Châtelet, the very same Edmond Floury held the position of technical director. So in the article he in fact referred also to his own viewpoint when stating that the board of the theater (on which he was joined by his brother) opted for animated pictures as a special attraction in the *féerie* spectacle they were going to produce. As the text further revealed, the play in question was *La biche au bois* (The doe in the wood), and that the kinematograph was used in it in one particular scene.

The question arises, however, how spectacular and sensational the-appearance of animated photography in the context of this stage *féerie* really was. If, a mere eighteen years after the fact, the readers of *Le courrier cinématographique* were presented with this event as something that had all but disappeared into oblivion, one wonders to what extent theatergoers had actually perceived these 35 meters of film projected as part of a stage play as something truly remarkable. How, in other words, did the audience experience kinematographic images in late 1896 when they were incorporated into a type of live performance which itself was supposed to draw principally on spectacular effects and visual splendor?

The significance of this question extends beyond the case of the Châtelet *féerie*. In a certain sense it is usually presumed that the advent of the kinematograph did have both an immediate and far-reaching effect on Western visual culture. If Antoine Lumière allegedly thought that his invention was one "without a future," conventional – and of course retrospective – wisdom has it that he was quite wrong indeed.[5] The extraordinary pace at which animated photography, in just a few years, developed into a major form of popular entertainment and an important industry suggests that the impact of moving pictures on the visual culture of its day was considerable, to say the least.

But did audiences actually perceive the advent of the kinematograph in this manner? Was it really seen as a transformation of the various "cultural series" into which it was integrated? How did moving images compare to, or compete with, other forms of visual entertainment? Such questions need to be addressed if we want to avoid the trap of taking for granted the idea

that moving pictures eclipsed older forms of visual entertainment as soon as the new medium appeared on the scene.[6]

The Stage *Féerie*: Stunning Magic and Visual Splendor

To assess the possible effect of kinematographic projections as part of a stage *féerie*, it is necessary to look briefly at this theatrical genre and its position within the realm of dramatic art. Around 1910, Paul Ginisty, a former director of the Théâtre de l'Odéon in Paris, published a book on the history of the *féerie*, probably one of the first, and still one of the few on this subject.[7] His account, however, was already a somewhat nostalgic one, and in fact the *féerie* is described here as a form of popular theater that captivated the audience with its rather naive kind of magic, but was threatened on the one hand by an overload of sensationalist effects and on the other by the increasing sophistication of spectators no longer willing to give in to its charms.

Ginisty's book dates the origins of the genre back to the sixteenth- and-seventeenth-century ballets at the royal court, which adapted legends and fairy tales, and to the so-called *pièces à machines* (machine plays) that were created to enchant their audiences with spectacular effects produced with the help of intricate stage mechanisms.[8] There were also, according to Ginisty, the three genealogical strands that came together in the *féerie*: ballets, fantastic and magical subject matter, and dazzling displays of visual splendor and stage craft. These traditions made their appearance in various ways throughout the eighteenth century in fairground theaters, but also in more prestigious institutions such as the Comédie-Italienne, the Comédie-Française, and the Opéra-Comique.[9] The genre Ginisty refers to as "modern *féerie*" took shape at the end of the eighteenth century with *Le pied de mouton*, a play that premiered in 1806, functioning as the "model *féerie*," the basic narrative patterns of which were "done over and over again."[10] The genre established itself during the first half of the nineteenth

century, mainly in the theater district along the Boulevard du Temple in Paris.[11] This was the period during which most of the "classics" of the genre were staged for the first time: *Les pilules du Diable*, *Les mille et une nuits*, *La biche au bois*, and many others. But already by 1866, the writer Théodore de Banville was looking back on this period with nostalgia:

> In order to imagine it as it was then, one has to dream up some sort of a compromise between the theaters where operas are played and those small shows where we can see the pantomimes. Spectacular sets representing Heaven or Hell, and as sceneries down here on Earth the most rugged mountainsides with streams, waterfalls and decrepit pine trees up on a cliff; complicated machinery, tricks, illusions, flights through the air, Bengal fire; armies of ballet dancers, supernumeraries and characters amalgamating all the mythologies and all the chivalric periods in their lavish and pretentious costumes: that was the overall effect of boulevard theater at that time when the spectacle still was the only nourishment given to the people's artistic appetites.[12]

In this passage de Banville not only enumerates the most important ingredients of the *féerie* genre; he also emphasizes the fact that its spectacular effects aimed at enthralling a popular audience. However, his use of the past tense here, as well as the retrospective attitude he adopts, clearly designates this description as referring to a bygone era.

According to Ginisty, Jacques Offenbach's *Voyage dans la lune* from 1875 can be considered "the beginning of an evolution" in which modern technology comes to supplement traditional fairy magic. D'Ennery's *Le voyage à travers l'impossible* is even seen as introducing something like a "scientific element."[13] But even this turn toward the modern era did not save the *féerie* from declining. Shortly before Ginisty published his book, in 1909, Adrien Bernheim, a government official in charge of subsidized theaters, mourned the imminent end of the genre in an article entitled "La féerie se meurt" ("The *féerie* is dying"). Published in the popular magazine *Touche à tout*, this text also took a somewhat nostalgic point of view: "What I like above all about the *féerie*," he remarks, "is the utter naïveté it radiates."[14] For him, as indeed for Ginisty, in the final instance the main problem for the time-honored genre was not so much its difficulty in

staying up to date, but rather the fact that the modern theatergoers no longer seemed to appreciate the naively magical atmosphere it created.

In spite of all the transformations the *féerie* underwent in the course of time, however, its main features appear to have remained more or less unchanged. In keeping with the traits highlighted by Ginisty, Arthur Pougin defined the *féerie* in his dictionary of theater terms from 1885 as follows:

> The *féerie* is a spectacular play showing a fantastic or supernatural subject where the miraculous element dominates. Thanks to this element, which allows the play to neglect the logic of facts as well as ideas, the action can develop freely in a conventional world, without having to worry about plausibility. Its sole objective is to present the splendor, the illusions and all the power that the luxurious staging, the most lavish costumes, the gracefulness of the dances and the charms of music can provide. In other words: everything which a most spectacular, most strange and immensely varied scenographic display can come up with to surprise, amaze and enchant the audience.[15]

This definition not only identified the *féerie* as a kind of "theater of attractions," but also as a type of performance necessitating considerable logistical and financial investment in order to create all these visual splendors. As Floury explained in a two-part article published in *La revue théâtrale* in 1906, such a *scène dite à grand spectacle* required large sums of money indeed, but was also expected to generate most of the revenue to sustain a theater's entire season.[16] In order to ensure the success that was of vital importance for this enterprise, the play was produced step by step, calling in specialists at every stage. Authors were called upon to develop a play around a predetermined subject, elaborating one act after another, parts of which had to be rewritten whenever a new idea called for modifications. Once the cast was recruited, the high points of every act – the *clous*, literally "nailing down" the effect – were to be found. At least three of these had to be original enough to provoke the enthusiasm of audiences and critics alike. This might demand additional investments, either in complicated tricks and effects or in dancers and other performers, of whom one hoped they could provide something completely out of the ordinary. Once these high points had been determined, the rest of the scenes could be

written to tie everything together.[17] A *féerie*, in other words, was seen as a commercial enterprise that brought with it considerable financial risks, but also, at least potentially, substantial profits, and thus needed to be meticulously planned. The main attractions in particular had to be carefully calculated in their effects.

Bernheim, in the article from 1909 quoted above, attributed the decline of the *féerie* to the very fact that the financial risk involved with this kind of show was regarded – and taxed – as being no different from other forms of dramatic art. But while ordinary plays, both comedies and dramas, could be staged at rather modest cost, the *féerie* required investments of an entirely different order. By 1909, according to Bernheim, the Châtelet was in fact the only stage left that was prepared to take such financial risks, and the only reason it could do so was that there was no competition left.[18]

Châtelet 1896: *La biche au bois*

To return to the *La biche au bois* staged at the Châtelet at the end of 1896, the role of the kinematograph in this show needs to be considered against the background of the generic characteristics mentioned above. What was the function of the animated photographs and how did they compare to the other attractions the play had to offer to its audience?

When the directors of the Châtelet decided to stage *La biche au bois*, they chose a play that had been presented and readapted more than once since it was first produced in 1845.[19] One commentator, Charles Buet, remarked that this might be "a way not to go bankrupt, but not a way to make a fortune"; he added somewhat disparagingly that even the prompter would be capable of staging this kind of *féerie*.[20] This, however, should be considered a rather exaggerated statement, given the enormous amount of creative and commercial energy that such an enterprise demanded. The condescendence evident in Buet's article is undoubtedly due to the fact that a *féerie* was hardly seen as a form of "serious" theater. This is confirmed by Edmond Stoullig's review of the play in *Le monde artiste*, published one week after its première on November 14, 1897. Stoullig explained to his

readers that a theater critic had no business judging a *féerie*, especially when it was a *reprise*: “The main, if not the only appeal of such a new run resides in the splendor of its mise en scène.”[21]

So while *La biche au bois* was certainly not considered by critics to be an important event in the 1896–7 theatrical season, it still drew considerable attention, as in a certain sense it was *the* grand *féerie* of the season. As evidenced by the *Almanach des spectacles*, published annually by Albert Soubies, not many plays of this genre were performed at the time, the reason being, to begin with, that not many theaters were able to provide the complex stage machinery needed for the various tricks and high points, which were, after all, the main ingredients of this type of production. In addition, the auditorium had to be big enough to seat the kind of crowd such a spectacular show had to pull in if there was to be a payback on the large sums of money the staging of a *féerie* required. The Châtelet had room for 2,600 spectators, so it was one of the few theaters in town that did have the seating capacity to turn an expensive show like *La biche au bois* into a financial success.[22]

Given the overall presence of commercial considerations in the preparations for *La biche au bois*, it is all the more important to understand exactly the role that the kinematograph, or rather Demenÿ’s Chronophotograph, played in this enterprise. Among Léon Gaumont’s business letters there is a project for a contract with the Châtelet, dated July 20, 1896.[23] According to this document Gaumont, in addition to producing the film, rented out the projector and equipment as well, for which he asked 30 francs a day and a guaranteed income of 500 francs, while the production of the negative was billed at 125 francs. For every positive print he charged 75 francs, demanding that they were to be used exclusively for the show at the Châtelet. Gaumont also requested that the posters specify that the animated projections were executed with a Demenÿ machine manufactured by the *Comptoir général de photographie* in Paris. For Gaumont this undertaking was apparently not simply a way to make money from the Chronophotograph; he also seized the opportunity to turn this into a public relations affair that would help him promote the new apparatus.

It is difficult to say what part exactly the production and projection of the moving images represented with regard to the overall budget of *La biche au bois*. Taking into consideration that the play was performed 140 times during the 1896–7 season, however, and that with the matinee of January 3, 1897 it brought in the best earnings of the entire year, namely the sum of 12,972 francs, the amount of money spent on the Chronophotograph may not have been one of the largest investments the directors of the Châtelet had to make for this show.[24]

So how exactly did the animated photographs function within the mise en scène of *La biche au bois*? Floury, in his article from 1914, gave a quite detailed description of the scene in question. Three years earlier Jacques Ducom, who in 1896 had been responsible for staging and shooting the picture, had published his own account of the way the Chronophotograph was used in the play.[25] According to these sources, the projections unfolded as follows: one of the characters of the play, a seneschal, is afflicted by a fly and its family living in his nose. This misfortune is the result of a curse a fairy inflicted upon him a long time ago, because he had neglected to invite her to his daughter's baptism. In one scene, the nose is shown extraordinarily enlarged. According to Ducom and Floury, this is due to the actions of a benevolent fairy trying to help the seneschal get rid of the insects, while the libretto states that the nose is being examined with a microscope.[26]

This scene was executed by means of a magic lantern projection, probably using a slide with a moving mask, so that the nose indeed seemed to get bigger and bigger. This was then combined with the moving picture showing a scene with a group of ballerinas who appeared to execute a devilish dance on top of the nose, torturing the poor man with forks and hammers. The film was shot on 58 mm film stock and hand-colored.[27] The filming took place on the roof of the Châtelet theater, and both Ducom and Floury relate that people passing by the Place du Châtelet looked up in amazement. To shoot the scene, Ducom used a small stage on which the dance was performed against a black backdrop, so that the moving images could be integrated into the set by being projected from the back of the stage.

During the performance of the *féerie*, the projections of both still and moving images were thus entirely incorporated into the action of the play. They functioned much more in the line of what now is called a special effect, rather than being highlighted as an autonomous act, as would be the case, for instance, with the aerial ballet executed by a group of dancers from Blackpool brought in especially for the show.[28]

Jean-Jacques Meusy quotes an article in *Le Gaulois* stating that the kinematograph was the high point of the piece, and a contemporary text by the author Georges Brunel referred to it as having a "most charming effect." Reviews of *La biche au bois* written by theater critics, however, tend to see the Blackpool dancers' aerial ballet as its uncontested highlight.[29] Looking back at the 1896–7 theatrical season, Stoullig added that in general the ballerinas in *La biche au bois* were quite pretty and also rather sparsely dressed.[30] There were thus other "attractions" on the stage of the Châtelet that clearly drew the attention of the critics more than the contribution of a new technology.[31]

In this respect, one can indeed observe that the members of photographic circles, compared to theater people, greeted the scene filmed for *La biche au bois* with much more positive reactions. Not only was it mentioned, as we have seen, in an article in *La Nature* dedicated to Demenÿ's Chronophotograph (and not in a piece on new developments in the realm of stage effects, for example), it was also referred to in a report on the meeting of the Société d'Études Photographiques de Paris in April 1897 as "*le ballet du Châtelet*" without any further explanation, which leads us to infer that the reference was familiar to readers.[32] The film was offered for sale under this title in the first Gaumont catalogue. The explanation given there refers to it also as the "*Ballet du feu* that was part of *La biche du bois* and had a good deal of success in a large number of performances of this play."[33] Stills from the film were also published in the *Annuaire de la photographie 1897*.[34]

According to Brunel, the moving images were projected so that they appeared more than 5 meters high and were perfectly sharp.[35] The audience may have experienced a fair bit of flicker, however, as this was a

problem discussed extensively at that time by the Societé d'Études Photographiques de Paris, of which Léon Gaumont was a relatively active member that year. In the April 1897 session, to which Gaumont had brought his Châtelet ballet scene, he also presented a new device that was supposed to help attenuate this inconvenience. Members of the society having experienced a reduction of flickering when waving a hand with the fingers spread in front of their eyes during the projection, Gaumont constructed a kind of a metal fan with square holes in it that could be used to obtain the same effect.[36] Such experiments do raise the question whether the spectators in the Châtelet theater also experienced eye strain from flicker. As the projection of the film strip lasted only a few seconds, this may have been negligible, yet it could still have had an influence on the overall impression people got from the new technology as part of a stage show.

When assessing the historical role of the Demenÿ Chronophotograph in *La Biche au bois*, one has to be aware of the fact that moving images were but one ingredient in a very elaborate show and that they quite probably made less of an impression on audiences than other attractions the performance had to offer. In more theoretical terms one might say that the projected images were so completely integrated into the cultural series *féerie* that viewers and critics generally did not experience them as a new and autonomous medium.[37] For people linked to the photographic profession, on the other hand, this probably appeared as a rather successful and promising experiment helping to explore the possible ways in which animated photographs could be used and marketed. Turning to the relatively well-established business of commercial stage entertainment must have seemed a quite obvious choice. There were in fact similar initiatives more or less at the same time. In February 1897 Maurice Curnonsky praised the use of a kinematograph in the *Paris Gala* at La Bordinière. The directors Elhem and Meudrot apparently incorporated footage of the Tsar's visit to Paris into their show, allowing the audience "to relive the unforgettable moments when we were so proud to have almost become Russians."[38] Unlike *La biche au bois*, these images were not produced for the occasion, and in fact constitute an example of the incorporation of actualities into a different cultural series from the *féerie*. So while in both cases the same

type of technology was employed, the uses differed considerably (a fact that also makes discussions about “firsts” in this context quite pointless).

One other point deserves mention with regard to the continuation of such practices. On May 4, 1897, the terrible fire at the Bazar de la Charité caused by an unfortunate action of the projectionist’s assistant claimed 129 lives. While further research into the consequences of the disaster is necessary, one can presume that theater directors may have become more reluctant to integrate such a potential fire hazard into a stage show.[39]

Châtelet 1905: *Les 400 coups du diable*

Almost a decade later, again at the Châtelet theater and premiering again at the end of the year during the holiday period, a big new *féerie* was presented to Parisian theatergoers. Written by Victor de Cottens and Victor Darlay, *Les 400 coups du diable* included two tableaux during which films were projected. The manufacturer who was asked to produce these scenes was none other than Georges Méliès. In several respects the general circumstances under which this Châtelet *féerie* was performed during the 1905–6 season were not that different from the situation in 1896–7. The production was hailed in a number of periodicals and illustrated magazines as a spectacular enterprise, a play belonging to a time-honored tradition, and a new work capable of living up once again to the expectations of children and grown-ups alike. And just like *La biche au bois*, this play, too, drew many spectators and was performed 216 times during the 1905–6 season. The matinees on December 25 and January 1 produced the best box-office results for the Châtelet of 1905 and 1906, grossing 15,357.50 and 15,332.50 francs, respectively.[40] On the other hand, the kinematograph was no longer a novelty by that time, and Méliès himself, for instance, regularly advertised his shows at the Robert-Houdin theater as “Prestidigitation et cinématographe” in the *Gazette des Théâtres*.[41] The question thus becomes whether its being a more established form of visual entertainment affected the role of animated photography in such a stage

production: was it a more prominent and, consequently, more acknowledged entertainment in 1905–6 because the audience was now more easily able to identify the new technology's contribution to an old-fashioned kind of spectacle?

The entire libretto for *Les 400 coups du diable* is reproduced in a supplement to the February 1906 issue of an illustrated monthly magazine for youth, *Mon beau livre*. This publication contains not only the entire text of the play and a number of illustrations, but also some technical information and the names of collaborators, such as the set designer Amable, the choreographer, a Miss Stichel, and the director of a pantomimic interlude, James Price. And of course Méliès is credited with the creation of two "kinematographic scenes."[42] The fact that the libretto of the play was reproduced in a magazine for young readers is quite indicative of the target group of such a *féerie*. Various details suggest, however, that the text published in *Mon beau livre* was more or less identical to the booklet the audience could purchase in the theater. The information referring to the artists responsible for the different attractions is clearly addressed to adult theatergoers. This confirms once again the complex status of the *féerie* as a stage genre at that time: it was manifestly considered a form of play that, mainly because of its fantastic story line, appealed to children and adolescents, while at the same time the extraordinary efforts put into the elaboration of surprising tricks, sensational displays, spectacular ballets, and magnificent sets provided a broad range of visual pleasures to the sophisticated grown-up spectator.

The kinematographic scenes created by Méliès were projected in the course of the first and the second act of the play and constituted nos. 2 and 12 of the 34 tableaux found in *Les 400 coups du diable*. In the first tableau, it is discovered that a good but terribly lazy genie had simply hidden away in a cupboard all the requests that humans had addressed to him. As a punishment he is banished and has to live on Earth. Here he has to face the Devil and can only vanquish him by finding a number of talismans. In the second tableau he has to get into a coach that is supposed to take him to his exile. The scene is described in the booklet as follows:

Tableau II

The Trip through the Air

Kinematograph

The coach driver is drunk. Discussion between the Good Genie leaning out of the door and the coach driver whipping his horse. The coach rushes off. The Good Genie is terrified. The coach passes a star that is inhabited. The population is agitated, accident etc.… Finally, the banger takes off into space, and just as one can start to perceive Earth it flips over. The Good Genie is thrown into space and opens an umbrella to serve as a parachute.[43]

According to Jacques Deslandes and Jacques Richard, the projection of Méliès's film functioned as an interlude, making possible a change of scenery. Méliès had photographed these scenes against a black background so that the screen blended in with the darkened stage. The kinematograph's second appearance, in tableau 12, "The Cyclone," may have served a similar function, as it is combined with an on-stage storm. Having found their first talisman, a rainbow-colored ribbon, the Good Genie and his companion Marius fall prey to the Devil unleashing a tempest.

Tableau XII

The Cyclone

Everything in the marketplace gets blown away: umbrellas, flowerpots, chickens. Everything whirls about and flies away because of the wind. The inhabitants cry out in fear, chimney bricks fall from the roof, and of course the Good Genie lets go of the legendary ribbon, which disappears up in the flies.

The stage gradually falls into darkness.

Gauze veils are lowered behind a calico curtain on which the kinematographed cyclone is projected. The Good Genie and Marius are seen flying by, holding on to chimney bricks.

They touch the treetops of a forest.

The noise is terrible, but stops all of a sudden and everything is calm.

The gauze curtain is lifted and the calico disappears.[44]

Once again kinematographic projection helped to prepare a scene change, as the following tableau presented a panoramic view of Paris in the year 2000. In fact, animated pictures were not the only type of visual medium

incorporated in this way into the performance of *Les 400 coups du diable*. Several transitions from one tableau to the next were carried out by means of moving panoramas guiding the characters from one place to another.

Looking at the way the kinematographic scenes produced by Méliès were inserted into the overall structure of the play one could argue that they functioned as transitions between attractions rather than as attractions in themselves. It is interesting in this respect that in an article published by a newspaper in New Zealand the scene of the cyclone is indeed highlighted, but no mention is made of the kinematographic scene: "some of the scenes were wonderfully ingenious, including the extraordinary storm scene in the second act. A cyclone rises, whizzing everything about the stage in a lifelike manner. Chimneys come toppling down, people are blown into the air, the winds howl, rain pours on the stage – and all is done by currents of compressed air which are allowed to play with the scenery and with the characters."[45] While some of the effects described by the journalist, such as the people blown into the air, may in fact have been part of the Méliès picture, it is quite obvious that he does not refer explicitly to the projected images. The stagecraft involved in this tableau must have impressed the correspondent much more than the animated photographs. Similarly, Joseph Leroux, a critic writing for *La revue théâtrale*, listed in his review the costume designer Landolff, the set designers Amable, Jambon, and Bailly, the choreographer Stichel, and the chief technician Colombier, but neglected to mention the creator of the kinematographic scenes.[46] Félix Duquesnel, writing for *Le Théâtre*, also praised the splendor of the production without any reference to the projections, while paying special attention to tableau 31:

> A panoramic curiosity just has to be mentioned: the 'Review of one hundred thousand men.' They really are one hundred thousand. The prestigious brush of Amable indeed succeeds in mobilizing an entire army. It fills the horizon of an immense plain, just like the battlefield at Sadowa where two million men could easily have destroyed each other. This is where the review of the troops takes place, in shining uniforms, the first ranks passing the spectators with rolling drums and sounding

trumpets, while the other parts of the army appear in the far distance. The illusion is complete and the sight is thrilling.[47]

Duquesnel used the term “animated panorama” to describe this attraction. Interestingly, he also emphasized the fact that it provided a complete illusion, an attribute that one might expect to be used to describe the kinematograph. As a matter of fact, there even is an outright negative reaction to the projected images. The anonymous critic of *L’art du théâtre*, just like the author of the article published in the New Zealand newspaper, highlighted the tempest scene among the play’s major attractions, again without hinting at Méliès’s contribution. Quite on the contrary, he added the following observation: “I rather less enjoyed the kilometers of panoramic sets, which on top of that were prolonged by kinematographic projections.”[48] This critic’s aversion to the moving images of both the panoramas and the kinematograph may be voiced in an exceptionally strong manner, but from the reviews consulted in the course of my research it seems evident that the films were not counted among the highlights of the production. This may also have been due to the rather nostalgic attitude that theater critics tended to adopt with regard to the *féerie* as a stage genre. Looked at from the point of view of childhood reminiscences, the addition of more modern technologies could hardly appear as a positive development, but rather as a threat to the *féerie*’s naive charms. While Méliès had been capable of transferring such enchantments into a form of cinema of attractions and to create a commercially successful type of production, the reverse – to introduce and establish kinematographic views as a new attraction for stage performances – proved to be much more difficult. The various visual delights with which the stage could provide the audience apparently continued to impress critics, at least, much more than the wonders and achievements of the new technology.[49] Curiously, however, the stage genre is nowadays almost forgotten, while film *féeries*, and in particular those produced by Georges Méliès, can be considered part of the canon of our audiovisual heritage.[50]

Conclusion

Looking at the place kinematographic projections had in two *féerie* productions in 1896–7 and 1905–6, a number of observations can be made that concern the historiography of early cinema.

When André Gaudreault[51] notes that Méliès's filmic *féeries* are part of the tradition of stage *féeries*, that they participate, in other words, in this cultural series, he is certainly right. Looking at the use of kinematographic projections in stage productions, however, one also needs to understand that seen from within this cultural series, animated photographs were at best an additional type of attraction, and in general one that had difficulties competing with, let alone outdoing, many of the other spectacular elements of such a show. The novelty aspect of kinematography did not automatically entail superiority of the new technology vis-à-vis more established forms of visual entertainment.

Second, animated photography in these years was a technology that functioned in a broad range of *dispositifs*.[52] It was attached, in other words, to different types of cultural practices: screen practices, Charles Musser[53] calls them, but also, as in the case of the *féeries* discussed above, stage entertainments. In order to understand the emergence and institutionalization of kinematography as a form of popular entertainment, one needs to take into account the fact that such practices did not simply converge into the future institution. What is at stake here, in terms of media history, are not issues of failure or success, but rather the diversity of practices and *dispositifs* that points toward fields of possibilities rather than toward teleological processes contributing in a linear and selective way to the consolidation of a medium in its dominant form.

Third, these case studies can help us to understand that there were rather different interests and strategies involved on the part of people from a variety of backgrounds engaged with the new technology. The photographers with whom Léon Gaumont discussed the ballet scene he produced for the Châtelet undoubtedly viewed it differently than theater critics; these two groups, in other words, did not have the same frame of reference. This is a point that historians need to take into account when assessing and discussing contemporary reactions to kinematographic projections.

Finally, the example of the *féerie* on stage and screen illustrates the productivity of a historical approach that does not take as its starting point a normatively assumed identity of media forms, but rather tries to take into account the relative openness of the way in which media *dispositifs* function in accord, but also in competition, with other such *dispositifs*, and the complex interactions between technologies, textual forms, practices, uses, and spectatorial positions which are at the basis of the phenomena we then designate as media, means of communication, or art forms.

Notes

1 The author would like to thank the staff of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris for their support, Stéphane Tralongo for letting me use his unpublished work on *La biche au bois*, Claire Dupré La Tour for her hospitality, and Sabine Lenk for her invaluable help at various stages of his research. This work is part of the Utrecht Media and Performance Research Group's project on Emerging Media.

2 G. Mareschal, "Le Chronophotographe de M. G. Demenÿ," *La Nature* 1225 (November 21, 1896): 391–4. These and all other translations from the French are my own, unless stated otherwise.

3 See the introductory texts by Jean-Jacques Meusy and Laurent Mannoni to *Les premières années de la société L. Gaumont et Cie. Correspondance commerciale de Léon Gaumont 1895–1899*, eds. Marie-Sophie Corcy, Jacques Malthête, Laurent Mannoni, and Jean-Jacques Meusy (Paris: AFHRC, 1998), 19–23 and 25–7, respectively.

4 Edmond Floury, "Les débuts du Cinématographe au Théâtre du Châtelet," *Le courrier cinématographique* 24 (June 13, 1914): 6.

5 On the origins of this phrase see Léo Sauvage, *L'affaire Lumière* (Paris: Lherminier, 1985), 178.

6 On this topic see, for example, André Gaudreault, "The Diversity of Cinematographic Connections in the Intermedial Context of the Turn of the 20th Century," in *Visual Delights: Essays on the Popular and Projected Image in the 19th Century*, eds. Simon Popple and Vanessa Toulmin (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000), 8–15.

7 Paul Ginisty, *La Féerie* (Paris: Louis Michaud, n.d. [1910]). An important recent study is Roxane Martin, *La Féerie romantique sur les scènes parisiennes (1791–1864)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007).

8 Ginisty, *Féerie*, 12–24.

9 Ibid., chap. 4 and 5.

10 Ibid., 96.

11 Ibid., chap. 10.

12 Théodore de Banville, *Les parisiennes de Paris* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1866), 208–9.

13 Ginisty, *Féerie*, 214. Neither of the plays corresponds with the Méliès films bearing the same title.

14 Adrien Bernheim, "La féerie se meurt," *Touche à tout* 9 (1909): 359.

15 Arthur Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s'y rattachent*, vol. 1 (1885; repr., Plan-de-la-Tour: Éditions d'Aujourd'hui, 1995), 360. Both Pougin and Ginisty refer only to the French tradition of such plays; similar forms in other countries are not discussed. After having heard Bryony Dixon's paper at the Sheffield 2005 "Visual Delights III – Magic and Illusion" conference and discussing the topic with her, I realized that nineteenth-century English pantomime shares a number of features with the French *féerie*. The Paris correspondent of a New Zealand newspaper called *Les 400 coups du diable* a "fairy play which in everything but in name is very much like our own Christmas pantomime." See "On the Paris Boulevards," *Poverty Bay Herald*, December 22, 1906. There are also some parallels between the *féerie* and the Austrian *Zauberspiel*.

16 Edmond Floury, "La cuisine théâtrale," *La revue théâtrale*, n.s., 54 (1906): 1387–8. The second part was published under the title "La cuisine théâtrale (suite)" in *La revue théâtrale*, n.s., 59 (1906): 1517–19.

17 See Floury, "La cuisine théâtrale" and "La cuisine théâtrale (suite)."

18 Bernheim, "La féerie se meurt," 358.

19 See Stéphane Tralongo, "Le 'cinématographe-ballet' et la tradition des images projetées à la scène: la logique de la récupération des clous dans *La biche au bois* (1896)" (unpublished manuscript, 2010, Microsoft Word file).

20 Charles Buet, “Le théâtre populaire,” *Revue d’art dramatique*, n.s., 1, no. 1 (November 1896): 38. Interestingly, in an article published in the same section of the same periodical in March 1897 another author, Charles Dinamis, discusses the meaning of the term “popular theater” and comes to the conclusion that it is the equivalent of “cheap theater” (“Le théâtre populaire,” *Revue d’art dramatique*, n.s., 1, no. 5 [March 1897]: 365). This, however, is clearly not the case as far as the *féerie* is concerned, given the financial investments the genre requires.

21 Edmond Stoullig, “La semaine théâtrale,” *Le monde artiste* (November 22, 1896): 742.

22 Alphonse Deville, *Rapport. Présenté, au nom de la Commission spéciale des 2*e *et 4*e *Commissions, sur les propositions de création d’un Théâtre municipal populaire et sur l’affectation de la salle du théâtre du Châtelet* (Paris: Conseil Municipal de Paris, 1897), 21.

23 See Courcy *et al.*, *Les premières années*, 131–2.

24 For these figures see Albert Soubies, *Almanach des spectacles. Année 1896* (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1897), 55; and *Almanach des spectacles. Année 1897* (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1898), 51.

25 Jacques Ducom, *Le cinéma scientifique et industriel* (Paris: Geisler, 1911), 58–60. This account is quoted extensively in Jacques Deslandes and Jacques Richard, *Histoire comparée du cinéma*, vol. 2, *Du cinématographe au cinéma 1896–1906* (Tournai: Casterman, 1968), 327–8. See also Tralongo, “Le ‘cinématographe-ballet’,” who, in addition, bases his description on the text of the play that contains additional information concerning the staging.

26 See Tralongo, “Le ‘cinématographe-ballet’,” for a detailed discussion of this latter point.

27 Two prints of the film survive, one at the Cinémathèque française, the other at the National Film and Television Archive in Bradford. See Laurent Mannoni, “Une féerie de 1896: *La Biche au bois*,” *Cinémathèque* 10 (Fall 1996): 117–23.

28 See Floury, “La cuisine théâtrale,” 1388.

29 See Jean-Jacques Meusy, *Paris – palaces, ou le temps des cinémas (1894–1918)* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1995), 42. Meusy refers to Georges

Brunel's volume *Les projections mouvementées, historique, dispositifs, le chronophotographe Demenÿ* (Paris: Comptoir général de photographie, 1897). See also the various reviews quoted by Tralongo, "Le 'cinématographe-ballet'," and Stoullig, "La semaine théâtrale," 742.

30 Edmond Stoullig, *Les annales du théâtre et de la musique 1896* (Paris: Paul Ollendorff, 1897), 296.

31 One theater critic, however, did praise the scene: "The two ballets are very well done and some of the tableaux, especially the one with the kinematograph, are sensational." Paul de Chambert, *Les poussières de la rampe. Notes théâtrales. Première série* (Paris: A. Charles, 1898), 46.

32 A. Villain, "Société d'Études Photographiques de Paris. Séance du 14 avril 1897. Présidence de M. Balagny. (suite et fin)," *Le moniteur de la photographie*, 2nd series, 4, no. 13 (July 1, 1897): 206.

33 See the pages of the catalogue reproduced in Deslandes and Richard, *Histoire comparée du cinéma*, 2: 331.

34 See Mannoni, "Une féerie de 1896," 122.

35 Brunel, *Les projections mouvementées*, 63, as paraphrased by Mannoni, "Une féerie de 1896," 118.

36 Villain, "Société d'Études Photographiques de Paris," 206. In later years the flickering was reduced by using a multi-blade shutter in the projector, but the basic principle remained the same.

37 On the concept "cultural series," see André Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2011), especially chap. 4.

38 Maurice Curnonsky, "Le théâtre parisien," *Revue d'art dramatique*, n.s., 1, no. 4 (February 1897): 294.

39 The possible impact of the fire on the use of kinematographs in theaters has been suggested to me by Sabine Lenk. See also Meusy, *Paris – palaces*, 57–60, for measures taken by the authorities. In 1908 one author still complained about the fact that the cinema was totally neglected by insurance companies. See Francis Mair, "Le cinématographe et les Compagnies d'assurance," *Phono-Ciné-Gazette* 42 (December 18, 1908): 472–3.

40 See Albert Soubis, *Almanach des spectacles. Année 1905* (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1906), 36, and *Almanach des spectacles. Année*

1906 (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1907), 66. According to Meusy, *Paris – palaces*, 107, the Châtelet by then seated 3,200 spectators.

41 See the advertisements in *Gazette des théâtres* throughout 1906.

42 *Mon beau livre* 2 (Paris: Fayard, 1906).

43 Ibid., 2: vi. See also Deslandes and Richard, *Histoire comparée du cinéma*, 2: 479–81.

44 *Mon beau livre* 2: xxvi. See also Deslandes and Richard, *Histoire comparée du cinéma*, 2: 481–2.

45 "On the Paris Boulevards."

46 Joseph Leroux, "Au Châtelet – Les Quatre Cents Coups du Diable," *La revue théâtrale*, n.s., 49 (January 1906): 1216. Another case in point is Stoullig, *Les annales du théâtre*, who also enumerates several collaborators to the show, but fails to mention Méliès.

47 Félix Duquesnel, "La quinzaine théâtrale," *Le Théâtre* 170 (January 1906): 2–3.

48 "Thèâtre [*sic*] du Châtelet. 'Les Quat'cents Coups du Diable.' Féerie en trente-six tableaux," *L'art du théâtre* 62 (February 1906): 24.

49 Interestingly, two books dedicated to stage tricks and effects from that period – Alfred de Vaulabelle and Charles Hermandinquer, *La science au théâtre: étude sur les procédés scientifiques en usage dans le théâtre moderne* (Paris: Henry Paulin, 1908) and Max Nansouty, *Les trucs du théâtre, du cirque et de la foire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1909) – both deal with the kinematograph and other technologies of animated photography, but do not discuss specific uses of them in stage performances or refer to any examples.

50 All this needs however to be nuanced in the light of the findings presented by Stéphane Tralongo at a conference on Méliès in July 2011 in Cerisy-la-Salle. It seems that numerous critics in the newspapers mentioned and acclaimed the kinematographic scenes. So maybe the authors writing for the specialized theatrical journals had a more "conservative" attitude toward modern media technologies than those writing for the press.

51 See Gaudreault, "*Les vues cinématographiques* selon Georges Méliès," 121.

52 On this topic see Frank Kessler, “La cinématographie comme dispositif (du) spectaculaire,” *Cinémas* 14, no. 1 (2003): 21–34.

53 Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1990), 15–54.

5

The Théâtrophone, an Anachronistic Hybrid Experiment or One of the First Immobile Traveler Devices?

Giusy Pisano

The film viewer's status as an immobile traveler is the product, as Jonathan Crary and others have explained, of new ways of seeing which derived from such visual phenomena as the magic lantern, optical toys, photography, and the panorama. There is no doubt that these devices and technologies largely contributed to transforming the activity of seeing and thereby the observing subject. Jonathan Crary sees in these new devices the clear sign of an epistemological rupture, one that defines the shift from "conceptions of imitation to ones of expression, from metaphor of the mirror to that of the lamp."[1] This upheaval made it possible, through the use of devices for remote communication, to blur the boundaries between popular traditions and the new urban culture. The figure of the *flâneur* described by Baudelaire[2] and Benjamin[3] curiously emerged at a time when technologies involved the observer's body to increasingly lesser degrees. Instead, what these new technologies required on the part of the immobile spectator was active mental participation.

Generally speaking, scholars have been concerned primarily with vision and would benefit from taking another, underestimated aspect into account: *media for listening*. Too often we forget sound technologies, which are nevertheless the basis of the principal spectatorial activities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Film historiography has called master narratives into question, and the work of Lev Manovich, Carolyn

Marvin, Erkki Huhtamo, Jonathan Sterne,[4] and many others on the interdependence between new and old media has brought new life to research on past audiovisual technology. These studies have made it possible not only to (re)discover images and sounds that were familiar, generally speaking, only to "pre-cinema" specialists, but also to demonstrate the way in which they live on in "new" digital technology. Their research brings to light the forms that pertain to both the past and the present.[5] Unfortunately, these new histories analyze events in a way that privileges the image over sound. However innovative it may be, the research initiated on early cinema by the Brighton congress in 1978 has not been an exception to this rule. And yet a history of sight cannot dispense with a history of hearing. Tracing the immobile journey of the modern spectator naturally consists in recovering a memory of images, but also one of sounds.

The modern spectator, generally seen as a creature of vision – or, to use Jonathan Crary's term, an observer – is not by any means a mere consumer of images. The technologies placed at spectators' disposal were both audio and visual in nature. New spectatorship practices and the growing importance of these technologies are essential parameters for understanding the emergence of a new *audiovisual spectator*. Sound devices made a fundamental contribution to the emergence of this new spectator. They initiated, before visual devices, a process of incorporating the spectator into a device that made it possible to dissociate the reception of sounds from their recorded source – devices in which perception, as Crary points out, is no longer defined in terms of self-presence and instantaneity.[6] Even before the emergence of the kinematograph, recording and transmitting across distances contributed to dethroning the "here and now" principle by calling into question the model of the *natural voice* and of the physical co-presence of performer and audience. This was the case with the phonograph, the telephone and, especially, as we will see, the Théâtrophone.[7]

In fact it must be mentioned that, while the Théâtrophone was simply a device for transmitting sounds – although this was done live, in a way that anticipated many future devices – by focusing the spectator's attention on a *listening point* separated from the sound's source, it profoundly modified

the traditional relationship of co-presence between audience and on-stage performers.[8] These silent spectators, far removed from the stage and their private space infringed, were isolated and rendered immobile, and yet they had to mobilize all their imagination for the show to take place. By placing spectators in a position of waiting for developments to which they will only have access through sound, by inviting them to follow spatiotemporal movement rather than create a "temporal synthesis,"[9] what is being solicited is their involvement. They can thus forget the mechanics – to which they are nevertheless closely tied – and let themselves be overcome by a presentiment: the intuition that they can never be sure of what they hear, because, in Jérôme Prieur's description, "inside, a time bomb is concealed. It could explode at any moment."[10]

This *presentiment*, acquired through experience of visual and sound experiences, is what makes film narrative possible. The effect sought by these devices was not "to depict the best, the most significant, the most vital moment,"[11] but to depict the *time* imposed by silences and sounds, transmitted through a receiver in the former case and by a series of images or by changing an aspect of a single image in the latter case. Sound devices made it possible to establish the concepts *conveyance of sounds*, *listening post*, *immersion*, the *interaction* of body and machine, the illusion of *seeing the invisible* through acousmatic listening, and the illusion of *capturing reality* by "canning" and staging it. These sound concepts have visual correspondences in devices ranging from the magic lantern to the kinematograph and, later, cinema in its analogue and digital forms.

In many respects, the listener who marvels at the "magic" sounds of the Théâtrophone foretells the future "homo cinematographicus" described by Gian Piero Brunetta.[12] The kinematograph accentuated the process of the camera obscura's decline, which had begun in the latter half of the nineteenth century with the development of new visual devices such as improved magic lanterns, the zoetrope, and chronophotography. This mutation, however, even before it was introduced to spectatorial activities, was apparent from the late nineteenth century with the arrival of acoustic devices such as the Théâtrophone. Shouldn't we thus study the conditions around the emergence of "early cinema" in light of the Théâtrophone

experience? And what would happen if, for once, we agreed to invert the scale of traditional values between sounds and images and see the emergence of visual devices – the kinematograph, television, etc. – as attempts to provide images for the Théâtrophone's sounds?

Between Performance and Attraction: Taking Another Look at the Théâtrophone

There are many examples from the late nineteenth century of sound devices whose epistemological importance has not yet been employed in comparative analyses with visual devices of the same period and with today's new technologies. And yet, as Jacques Perriault remarks, "examining the technical literature of the period, between 1878 and 1890, one comes upon connections between inventions one has trouble believing are so old."[13] The Théâtrophone – generally overlooked by film studies, with its focus on images more than on sound and on institutional cinema more than on film's relationship with other technological devices – is perhaps the most startling of all such inventions, as much for its current interest after more than a century as for the period in which it appeared. The Théâtrophone was the result of a series of experiments located in the sphere of research into, on the one hand, the telegraph, the telephone, and electricity, and on the other hand into phonetics and speech therapy using "oralism."[14] And yet a mysterious veil still obscures this mythical object, as if it were difficult to believe that such a technological feat could have appeared as early as 1881. While the principles of the device's operation were described in various books and articles,[15] it remained neither at the planning stage nor at the level of fleeting attraction. It operated not only in a variety of public places – cafés, concert halls, hotels, etc. – but also in the homes of individual subscribers, right into the 1930s. Parisian audiences could wonder at this object, whose appearance is admired even today, while listening to performances being broadcast from a venue located behind the

Boulevard des Capucines, where roller coasters and other attractions had been set up: a fortune teller, labyrinths, Marey's sphygmograph for taking one's pulse, etc.[16] Ineluctably, the Théâtrophone arrived at the Musée Grévin in 1889,[17] after a brief stay at the Eldorado theater, a future movie theater on boulevard Saint Denis. The Théâtrophone fits right into this temple of illusions and dreams alongside other fantastic activities: phantasmagoria, and, a few years later, Émile Reynaud's optical theater. It was placed, as Georges Sadoul relates, "on the Musée Grévin's second floor, blaring out waltzes played by an orchestra of Hungarian women in red vests and mantles. They were listened to with less curiosity than the Théâtrophone."[18]

The Théâtrophone's very first public demonstration situated it in the lineage of both scientific curiosities and spectacular entertainments, highlighting on the one hand the uncertain path of media conceived in the late nineteenth century[19] and on the other what Patrice Flichy calls the "circulation of communication machines."[20] In fact it was exhibited at the International Electrical Exhibition in Paris in 1881, for which Clément Ader designed a system making it possible to broadcast concerts or plays performed more than two kilometers from the event. Visitors could listen live throughout the duration of the fair to evening performances at the Opéra, Opéra-Comique, and Théâtre-Français theaters.

An engraving published in a volume by Théodore du Moncel (Figure 5.1) shows these consoles arranged on the stage of the Opéra: 24 "microphonic"[21] transmitters lined the width of the stage, 12 on each side of the prompter's box. The transmitters were grouped in pairs at some distance from each other to enable the audience to follow the actors' movements. They were connected by underground wires to a commutator located near the great hall of telephony in the Palais de l'Industrie, the site of the Exhibition. This large space was divided into five separate rooms, each with carpeting to muffle outside sounds. Some twenty telephones were hung in pairs around each room, giving "each listener the impression of two distinct transmitters, one in each ear."[22] The sound varied in volume depending on the actors' positions on the stage, and the actors' voices were

picked up by microphones on one side or the other of the prompter's box depending on which side of the stage they were on.[23] In the middle of the theater was a telephone transmitter; here, an operator notified listeners when a play was about to begin and cut the power when new audiences, waiting at the theater's door, arrived. "These theatrical broadcasts had a great success," du Moncel wrote. "Every night of a performance at the Opéra there was a line-up to get in, right up until the end of the Exhibition. While naysayers wanted to throw cold water on this success and protest in the name of art against these musical reproductions, almost everyone of good faith was delighted."[24] Figure 5.2 shows the path the Théâtrophone transmission took between the Opéra and the Electrical Exhibition.

Figure 5.1 The Théâtrophone's transmitters lined up along the front of the stage. Source: Théodore du Moncel, *Le Téléphone* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1882), 169.

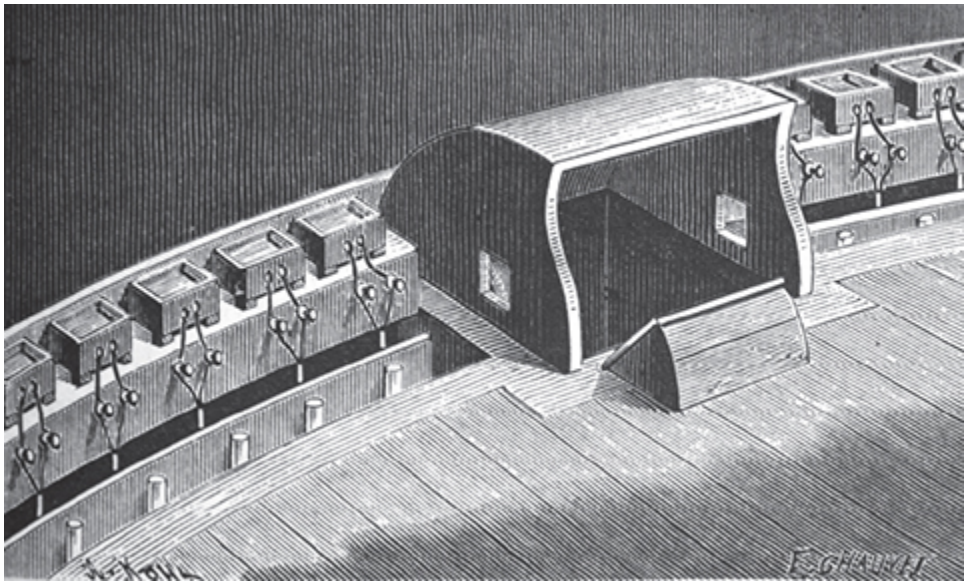
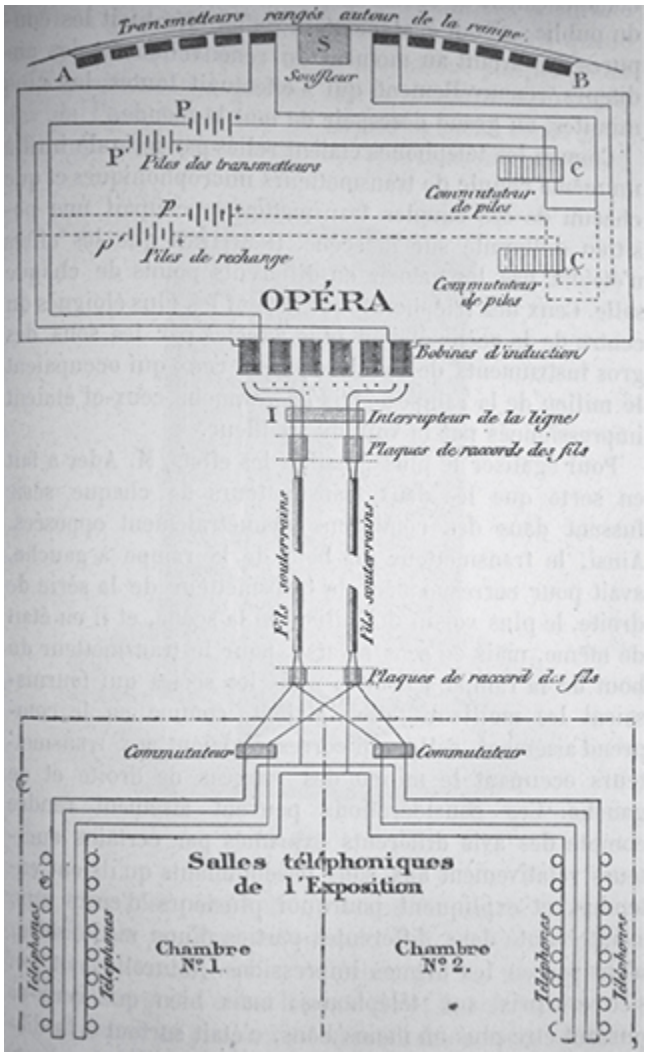


Figure 5.2 The path of the Théâtrophone between the Opéra and the International Electrical Exhibition. Source: Théodore du Moncel, *Le Téléphone* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1882), 173.



After the success of the Electrical Exhibition, two engineers, Szavady and Marinovitch, adapted Clément Ader's project to create a subscription service. They exhibited this ingenious system for the appreciation of laypeople and connoisseurs – among the audience was Thomas Edison – at the 1889 World's Fair in Paris. Following this second demonstration, the Société du Théâtrophone and the Société Générale des Téléphones entered into an agreement to create a public service paid for by both individual subscribers receiving it in their homes and through the broadcast in public places of major performances from Parisian theaters. In the meantime, on September 1, 1889,[25] the Société Générale des Téléphones was purchased by the government. At the time there were 11,140 active telephone accounts in the country, a good source of potential clients for the Théâtrophone. Hitherto available only in public places where it was installed, the

Théâtrophone was now introduced to the private sphere. Home theater was created. Basically, the device consisted of a "rosette," at the center of which converged all the wires from the on-stage "microphones" by way of which it was possible to establish direct contact with the various theaters. Each wire was attached in turn to a distributor which standardized the signal and which connected the subscribers' jacks to the circuit of the theater they wished to listen to. The system's underlying principle remained unchanged for several decades, as the author of an article in the magazine *Science et Vie* remarked in 1921: "The facilities of this head office [located at 23 rue Louis le Grand, near the city's "grands boulevards"], which I have visited, is the same as it was originally. It has an archaic quality that reminds us of the early days of telephony."[26] Naturally, the "microphones," the electrical circuits, and the device itself continued to evolve technically, up until about 1932, but the underlying principle – acousmatic listening to a performance – remained unchanged.

The kind of listening made possible by the Théâtrophone was both private and public:[27] it was individual, because it was directed toward an individual listener, but it was also collective, because the device was used simultaneously by a large number of listeners – subscribers and those in public venues where the system was installed. In addition, the sounds broadcast live made it possible to join artificially the live spectators in the theater audience and those listening in on the Théâtrophone receiver. This simultaneity gave the illusion of being present at a *natural*, *on-stage performance* at the same time as it was the sign of a great *technological achievement*, one far removed from the traditional value of a performance. This illusion was backed up by a technical aspect: the sound transmitted by the Théâtrophone was *rough* in nature, being mediated only by a group of telephone transmitters and a system capable of recreating this sound "as is" in a remote location.

Naturally, this was an illusion, but it remains the case that this rough, natural sound is quite different from the sound signal that came into being later: amplified, expanded, cut, superimposed on other sounds; in short worked up, even transformed. The Théâtrophone's sound, without being a copy of reality, was nevertheless the product of an encounter between a telephone transmitter and the "naked" and raw voice of the on-stage

performer. It was a sound which, in sum, while offering a representation of itself (as the camera obscura had done for the image), retained the illusion of what Noël Burch calls a “raw reality” by means of its mere *recreation* (a word that recurs throughout the literature around the acoustic period). With the Théâtrophone, as Burch pointed out about kinematograph images, “This is no longer (not yet) a question of the construction of the real in the manner of naturalism, but of a picture which, while not an analogue of reality, is nevertheless the singular result of an encounter between the cine camera and ‘raw reality’.”[28] It is enough to replace the words “picture” and “cine camera” with “sound” and “telephone transmitter.” Indeed this illusion of reality, so often invoked to describe the earliest film strips, is the very basis of Théâtrophone entertainment.

Written and iconographic records show that listeners’ infatuation with the Théâtrophone derived not just from their interest in its content – initially opera and later other kinds of programs – but also from their interest in the technological feat of the device itself. It would even be possible to assert that this latter “attractional” quality (one later shared by the earliest kinematograph demonstrations) was most apparent in the marketing of the device and the comments of listeners. The *form in which it was presented* seems to have been this entertainment’s main selling point.

There can be no doubt that the performance transmitted live by the Théâtrophone combined elements of both stage performance and its representation by means of technology. The result was a disjointed, mixed form, one that film extended right into the 1920s[29] and which undoubtedly contributed to the “presentational” form that Noël Burch ascribes to so-called early cinema images.

From the Imagination to International Networks

In 1921 a journalist predicted that there would be “no more musicians, no more orchestra in the salons of our day for concerts and balls; savings on seats and money. With a subscription to one of the many musical companies

which may be in favor, people will get their supply of music by electric cable."[30] Such predictions, made by René Doncières, were far from being the product of an excessive imagination. Nearly a century later, these same arguments are advanced to promote performances transmitted, this time, without the intermediary of electric cables but live via satellite. The Théâtrophone cleared the path, long before the kinematograph, radio, cinema, or present-day systems ranging from the iPod to satellite transmissions in movie theaters, to the *ubiquity of the spectator*. As is the case today, prophecies and conjectures back then were fed by the accounts of famous authors,[31] by novels and marketing campaigns, especially in the illustrated press. Indeed the iconography around new devices such as the Théâtrophone was abundant and quite stylized. It undoubtedly played a role in the collective imagination, as fantastic literature of the day shows. Since the late eighteenth century, technological objects had been a quite frequent artistic and literary motif. The Théâtrophone was present in various forms in stories marked by nineteenth- and twentieth-century technological innovations. They all reveal the peculiar status of the new spectator, constrained to immobility and absolute silence and completely at the mercy of the machinery.

In the short story "Civilização" (1892), the Portuguese author José Maria Eça de Queiroz (1845–1900) recounts a visit to a changer, Jacinto, a changer for modernity who tracks down the slightest novelty that could "facilitate thought": typewriters, automatic copy machines, the Morse telegraph, the phonograph, the telephone, the Théâtrophone, and others still.[32] Then, in a novel published after his death entitled *A Cidade e as Serras* (1901), published in English translation as *The City and the Mountains*, Eça de Queiroz describes the success of the Théâtrophone in Paris's high-society circles and paints an ironic picture of these new listeners: "He clapped the two receivers of the theatrephone to his ears and remained abstracted with a deep furrow in his brow. Then suddenly in a voice of command he shouted: 'It's she! Hush! Be quiet everyone!… Come, all of you. Princesse de Caraman, this way. Here! All of you! Shut up! It's she! Hush!' Then, as Jacinto had prodigally installed two theatrephones, each one provided with twelve wires apiece, each of those ladies and

gentlemen hastened submissively to find a ‘receiver’ and to remain soundlessly immovable.”[33]

In her novel *The Massarenes*, the English novelist Ouida (pseudonym of Marie Louise de la Ramée, 1839–1908) describes the modernity of her female character with this metaphor: “What a terribly expensive animal was *a modern woman of the world*! As costly as an *ironclad and as complicated* as a *theatrophone*.”[34] In the United States, Edward Bellamy’s utopian novel *Looking Backward 2000–1887* (1888) depicts the home telephone being used to listen to music.[35] Beyond these few stories describing the Théâtrophone and its users, the place where we find the most extensive ideas about the peculiar status of the spectator–listener is in the novels of Jules Verne, with all the fanciful musings we associate with his work. Verne mostly uses this status as a model for thinking about new technology. In his work, all the machinery of his day is exaggerated and put to new use, when it is not completely dreamt up in a quite futuristic albeit ironic mode.[36] While “phonograph’s papa” in Villiers de l’Isle Adam’s novel *L’Ève future* (1886) was already a hybrid instrument, born out of an encounter between two inventions, the phonograph and the telephone, and thereby making possible direct communication and thus an implicit ubiquity, Jules Verne’s “Phonotéléphote” (a telephone combined with a telephote) in his novel *La journée d’un journaliste américain en 2890* (“A Day in the Life of an American Journalist in 2890,” 1891) is even more powerful because it transmits live sounds *and* images. With this device, the *Earth Herald* newspaper is able to provide its subscribers “not only the story but also the image of events, obtained by intensive photography.”[37] The machinery is so perfect and the public so taken with it that it is used to attempt a live resurrection.

Verne’s novels, with their constant play of real, fanciful, and futuristic elements, highlight the dichotomy to be found in modern machines: they are both the source of progress and a means of controlling people ready to believe the most unlikely things. The trap of illusion is also at the center of another Verne novel, *Le château des Carpathes* (*The Carpathian Castle*, 1892). In this book, Verne constructs his story around several listening and seeing instruments (such as the telescope, telephote, and telephone) found

in his characters' lives. There is also an extraordinary audiovisual device which, by transmitting the voice with a phonograph and projecting images onto a mirror, creates an effect of presence/absence and thus a strong impression of reality. This device turns out to be a trick because the image, although it seems quite real, is only the reflection of a painted portrait. In Verne's description of this device we can see a foreshadowing of television, cinema, holograms, and many other innovative systems. What I would like to highlight here is that in every one of the above-mentioned examples the reference remains the Théâtrophone, with its principle of the absence/presence of images such as I described in my introductory remarks. Verne returned to this theme in an explicit manner in *L'île à hélice* (*Propeller Island*, 1895), in which a string quartet attempts to demonstrate to the millionaires living on a floating island teeming with new technology (telephones, telephotes, Kinetographs, telautographs, etc.) that reproduction and telecommunication cannot replace a live performance of an artistic masterpiece.[38]

But the author who took this interplay of real, fanciful, and futuristic elements the furthest was undoubtedly the illustrator, caricaturist, and novelist Albert Robida. This contemporary of Jules Verne set his novel *Le vingtième siècle* (1882) in a world of remote communication. Real and imaginary devices alike had a place of honor in his story: Alexander Graham Bell's telephone (1876), Thomas Edison's phonograph (1877), and especially the Téléphonoscope, a kind of foreshadowing of a device part way between the Théâtrophone and the kinematograph (and later television) by means of which sounds and images were broadcast live into the homes of subscribers using the telephone and a "crystal plate," respectively. Here he describes the device and its use:

> Among the sublime inventions the twentieth century is proud of, among the thousand and one marvels of a century of such fruitful and splendid discoveries, the téléphonoscope can be counted as one of the most magnificent.… Formerly, the telegraph made it possible to understand a remote correspondent or interlocutor and the telephone to hear them. The téléphonoscope lets you see them at the same time. What more could one want?…

> Theaters too, apart from the normal number of people in the theater, had a certain number of spectators in their homes, connected to the theater by the wire of the téléphonoscope. A new and considerable source of revenue.… This is the marvel that has been accomplished by the invention of the téléphonoscope.…
>
> The device consists of a simple crystal plate set into the wall of one's apartment or placed like a mirror above a fireplace. The viewer, without any trouble, sits in front of this plate, chooses his entertainment, connects with the theater and right away the show begins. With the téléphonoscope we are thus truly in the presence of a performance for the eyes and the ears. The illusion is total and absolute: one feels as if one is watching the play from the back of a first-tier box. Mr. Ponto was a great theater lover. Every evening, after dinner, when he did not go out, he was in the habit of amusing himself by watching a téléphonoscope performance of an act or two of some play, opera or ballet put on by one of the great theater companies not only of Paris but also of Brussels, London, Munich and Vienna, because the téléphonoscope makes it possible to follow developments in theater across Europe. One is no longer part of the Paris or Brussels audience alone; without leaving the house, one is a part of a great international audience![39]

The idea of making performances universally accessible by live broadcast, which Robida imagined in 1882, came to fruition a few years later. Devices similar to the Théâtrophone appeared in every major European city, including those across the Atlantic. Among the most talked-about experiments was a device installed in Lisbon in October 1884. With it, the San Carlo theater made available a program of performances, at first to King Luís and his family and then to subscribers throughout the year.[40] That same year in Belgium, operas performed on the stage of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels could be heard as far away as Ostende using the Théâtrophone and its international lines.[41] In 1895 the Électrophone enabled listeners in London to listen to concerts, plays, and even mass.[42] Several experiments took place from time to time in the United States, and more decisively beginning in the 1910s, when several

variants of the “Talking Newspaper and Amusement Purveyor” were offered by various telephone companies: the “Tellevent” or “Televant” (Michigan State Telephone Company); the “Telephone Herald” (United States Telephone Herald Company); the “Musolaphone” (Illinois Telephone and Telegraph Company); the “Telectrophone” (Pennsylvania Telectrophone Company); and the “Tel-musici and Magnaphone” (Baltimore Company).[43] In Canada, the *Montreal Gazette* of January 12, 1911 announced that “the Telephone Herald company may soon establish a plant in Montreal.”[44]

The most remarkable experience, however, took place in Budapest. There the Telefon Hírmondó,[45] developed in 1892 by Tivadar Puskás, began transmitting on February 15, 1893. Subscribers to this telephonic newspaper had access to a quite varied live program: news bulletins with a summary of newspaper stories, brief amusing stories, entertainment news, concerts, opera, and even English, Italian, and French language courses. Telefon Hírmondó began with sixty subscribers, but their number grew quickly: to 700 in 1894, 4,915 in 1895, 7,629 in 1899, and almost 6,200 in 1901, finally reaching 15,000 in 1907. This increase continued in the 1920s after the company obtained permission in 1925 to operate like a radio station. In the 1930s, subscribers had the choice of listening to Telefon Hírmondó programs either by telephone or on the radio. Then, when World War II began, the outmoded telephone network gave way to radio. This experience, like all those described here, was a pivotal moment in the formation of a new spectator, something that did not escape the attention of the international press at the time, which described the success of these experiments and hailed the *revolutionary* quality in numerous articles published in various corners of the world.

It is an established fact that home theater was created in 1881, but the rare historians who devote a few lines to this fact today seem to view this event as an anachronistic curiosity without real significance, or as a failure on a technological level. To speak of definitive failure when examining the history of technology is a mistake, however, because often what barely functions at a given moment takes off later in another cultural context. Other arguments are also advanced to explain the “disappearance” of the

Théâtrophone: the arrival of radio, cinema, and television and problems around copyright.[46] A medium does not disappear; as André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion remark, “it tends to become hybrid, to take up with other media, in a sort of generalized intermedial convergence,”[47] which is exactly what happened with the Théâtrophone, whose principles found a home in other media. Carolyn Marvin has pointed out that one of the fundamental principles for the development of future media is the shift from oral to mediated communication. She thus remarks that “the Telefon Hírmondó was a hybrid of newspaper practices, conventional modes of oral address, and telephone capabilities that anticipated twentieth-century radio.”[48] We could also relate this experience to the emergence of other devices such as the kinematograph and, much later, digital methods for remote communication.[49] Indeed the Théâtrophone and the later Telefon Hírmondó were much more than precursors of radio: they contributed to dethroning the idea of “here and now” by introducing the principle of technological mediation between performer and audience, a mediation through which the traditional value of the *stage* began to decrease in importance and the *ubiquity of the spectator* became the culturally accepted condition. To traditional models in which the voice and physical presence were at the heart of the artistic performance was added a model in which the very use of the technological device constituted a performance in its own right.[50]

The Hybridization of the Théâtrophone as a Model for Future Applications

The Théâtrophone, a hybrid device par excellence, left its trace not only in works of the imagination but also in the conception of technological devices throughout the twentieth century and even into the beginning of the twenty-first. Its system for conveying sound to a remote location using telephone

transmitters was the basis of the earliest experiments in synchronizing sound and image (Auguste Baron's Graphophonoscope; Clément Maurice's Phono-cinéma-théâtre); Edison's Kinetoscope (1894) used the same principle of individual listening using headphones. For Lee De Forest, the Théâtrophone was the model to be surpassed by a new system which could transmit the voice to a remote location without wires using a three-electrode lamp (the Audion, 1907). The triode lamp became an essential element of radio broadcast, sound film (De Forest's Phonofilm, 1919–23), and television, but also of the earliest radar equipment, computers, etc. Like Ader before him for the Théâtrophone, when De Forest demonstrated his wireless radio transmission he chose a symbolic location: the roof of New York's Metropolitan Opera, from which he was able to carry out a 20-kilometer radio transmission of the great tenor Enrico Caruso using a hundred telephone lines. *Telephony* commented: "Interesting experiments with the De Forest system of wireless telephony have been carried on in New York City with a view to determining whether it is practicable to transmit music by this method. The experiments were carried from a transmitting station on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House. Efforts were made to transmit music, as far as Boston and receiving stations were set up in several parts of New York City. On the Royal Mail steamer 'Avon' 260 guests were assembled and listened to Caruso's voice reproduced by wireless telephony."[51]

As early as 1907, a brochure published by the De Forest Radio Telephone Company announced that it would soon be possible to listen to sermons, music, lectures, etc. by radio telephone: "It will soon be possible to distribute grand opera music from transmitters placed on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House by a Radio Telephone station on the roof to almost any dwelling in Greater New York and vicinity …. The same applies to large cities. Church music, lectures, etc., can be spread abroad by the Radio Telephone."[52] The Théâtrophone also served as a model for radio. In 1929 Paul Deharme, the author of the first manifesto in French for radio art, wrote: "The broadcast facilities are nothing but new and curious telephone exchanges and the reception equipment nothing but phonographs whose records are free. The T.S.F. [the French public radio network] is nothing but an immense théâtrophone."[53]

Finally, the experiments that gave rise to Theater TV were also the product of a hybridization of various cultural series: the Théâtrophone, the cinema, radio, and television. The first experiments in large-screen television in the United States, carried out by Bell Telephone Laboratories and the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), date from the 1920s. They focused on enlarging a fluorescent image on a cathode-ray screen.[54] It was a very low resolution image.[55] Research continued in Europe and the United States in the 1930s to improve definition and enlarge the image, in particular by means of more powerful tubes and large apertures, and by adding sound and color (Baird in Great Britain, Fernseh in Germany, De Forest in the United States, and Fischer in Switzerland). The film studios became interested in 1938, seeing in the experiments the means to reduce their distribution and exhibition costs by eliminating the need to make prints of their films,[56] diversify the activities of their exhibition circuits, and increase ticket prices.

Although it is difficult to estimate the number of cinemas fitted out with permanent Theater TV equipment, beginning in 1952 the system became quite popular with audiences.[57] There were five nationwide broadcasts in 1952; the first, like that of the Théâtrophone before it, was an opera (*Carmen*) transmitted from the Metropolitan Opera to 31 cinemas in 26 American cities.[58] The year 1953 was both the apogee of Theater TV and the beginning of its decline. Despite the growth in the number of broadcasts and the emergence of the first companies (Theater Network Television [TNT] and Box Office Television [BOTV]) devoted to producing and distributing programs for this market using new and different marketing models, it became clear that growth of the Theater TV network depended on the success of a few attractions with considerable added value not available on home television (sporting events, operas, Broadway plays). Like the Théâtrophone, Theater TV also ran up against copyright problems for works fiercely protected by other media. By 1955 it was already too late for large-screen television. The number of homes with television sets passed 30 million and the industry's conversion to color had begun. In the end, this audiovisual Théâtrophone had to wait for the development of digital technology and the generalization of multiple ways of disseminating

the same event (pay-per-view channels, mobile telephones, ADSL networks, fiber optic networks, etc.).

Around the end of the first decade of our new century, the Théâtrophone was attracting new attention in the press as the first example to pose the legal questions around remote broadcast. This became the leitmotif of the French company Orange Vallée, which seized on the legend of the Théâtrophone to justify the entrance of telecom companies into the world of "content" creation: "when it was invented, [the telephone's] first goal was to become a Théâtrophone capable of transmitting plays and concerts. Thus the telephone was born with content in its DNA," an industry executive recently declared.[59] Finally, on December 30, 2006 New York's Metropolitan Opera marked a return to its Théâtrophone, Radio Telephone, and Theater TV experiments, this time with the voices and images of an opera staged in its theater transmitted live and in high definition to movie theaters. Since this initial experiment, the "Met-Live in HD" program has taken on international proportions: by the end of 2008 around a thousand cinemas in 44 countries were ready to transmit not only the Met's 2009–10 season, but also plays, soccer games, etc. Paradoxically, with this new hybrid movie theaters have rediscovered their multi-purpose past from before the period of cinema's institutionalization. As André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion point out, "movie theaters today have taken on a degree of diversity, a *plural* nature, which is not out of keeping with a certain tradition of the multi-purpose hall of days gone by. Under this tradition, films were shown in places that were not exclusively dedicated to them and which could be used for other kinds of entertainment or, in terms we are more apt to use, in venues where a variety of cultural series crossed or gathered."[60]

In the eyes of the media historian, the emergence and institutionalization of cinema are extremely complex phenomena. In the case of an emerging medium, it is difficult to distinguish which elements are in keeping with the systems that preceded or are contemporaneous with it and which elements break with these systems. In the beginning, the kinematograph combined several histories: that of the Théâtrophone, as we have seen, along with the magic lantern, photography, the comic strip, vaudeville, pantomime, the phonograph, popular song, the operetta, popular theater, etc. Hybridity was

its *raison d'être* at a time when the mixing of cultural series occurred in response to the anthropological mutations taking place in the face of society's technological turn. In this respect, Jonathan Sterne remarks that "[a] medium is a recurring set of contingent social relations and social practices, and contingency is key here. As the larger fields of economic and cultural relations around a technology or technique extend, repeat, and mutate, they become recognizable to users as a medium. A medium is therefore the social basics that allows [*sic*] a set of technologies to stand out as a unified thing with clearly defined functions."[61]

Hence the need to study the genealogy of technical devices from the perspective of their social and artistic uses. The telephone is an emblematic example of this. It was the first application conceived for its entertainment value, because its dissemination as a means of communication began with its entertainment possibilities being staged – in the proper sense of the term – at the 1881 and 1889 World's Fairs in the form of the Théâtrophone. Its marketing and iconography highlighted its artistic qualities: literary accounts depict its evolution in audiovisual terms. Soon afterwards, the telephone was relegated to the role of a mere device for quick communication. Nevertheless, the Théâtrophone would only be forgotten some twenty years later in favor of devices that gave images to its sounds: the kinematograph and, later, television. The Théâtrophone was restricted to transmitting sound, and it was the very presence of this sound that reminded the listener of the cruel absence of images, because the primary interest of these sounds, as it is for any acousmatic listening, is the play between the absence and presence of the visual source. These latent images, as fantastic literature and the audiovisual devices that came after the Théâtrophone illustrate, are desired, sought after, and suggested by it.

Today, the telephone has become a hyper-medium, the principal means of access to new forms of online entertainment (the Internet, television, radio, music, etc.). Its media identity becomes more unclear when a new access channel moves in: the voice–data–images nexus. As it has evolved, the telephone has crossed with other media and left traces of its passage. In return, these media found new possibilities and sometimes generated a new medium in turn, or rediscovered past practices. Hybridization is thus not an

exceptional state but a constant in the history of technology and thereby in our cultural history.

Notes

1 Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 9.

2 See Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1970), 9; and "Salon de 1857," *Oeuvres*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 273. See also Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 4, *1938– 1940*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

3 Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 3, *1935–1938*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 39–40.

4 Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking about Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); Erkki Huhtamo, "From Kaleidoscomaniac to Cybernerd: Towards an Archeology of the Media," in *ISEA '94*, ed. Minna Tarkka (Helsinki: University of Art and Design, 1994), 130–5; and Erkki Huhtamo, *Illusions in Motion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

5 See Erkki Huhtamo, "Resurrecting the Technological Past: An Introduction to the Archeology of Media Art," *InterCommunication* 14 (1995), http://www.ntticc.or.jp/pub/ic_mag/ic014/huhtamo/huhtamo_e.html.

6 Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 4.

7 Sometimes known in English as the "theatrephone" or the "theatrophone," throughout this chapter I will refer to the device by its original French name.

8 Melissa Van Drie, “Théâtre et technologies sonore (1870–1910): Une réinvention de la scène, de l’écoute, de la vision” (PhD diss., Université Paris 3, 2010).

9 Jacques Aumont, *L’œil interminable* (Paris: Séguier, 1995), 25.

10 This is how Prieur describes the magic lantern performance, in which the sounds provided by the lecturer and lantern operator and those of a musical instrument guide the spectator toward this apotheosis. See Jérôme Prieur, *Séance de lanterne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 121.

11 Aumont, *L’œil interminable*, 75–6.

12 Gian Piero Brunetta, *Il viaggio dell’iconauta dalla camera oscura di Leonardo alla luce di Lumière* (Venice: Marsilio, 1997).

13 Jacques Perriault, *Mémoires de l’ombre et du son, une archéologie de l’audio-visuel* (Paris: Flammarion, 1981), 194.

14 “Oralism,” which used hearing devices and proscribed sign language in schools for the deaf, took hold soon after the Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf in Milan in 1880. In France, this proscription was not lifted officially until 1976. The experience of the Théâtrophone highlights once again the fundamental importance of sound in the nineteenth century. For this reason, it is important to relate the Théâtrophone to the phonograph and to research in phonetics. George Bernard Shaw’s play *Pygmalion* (1912), adapted to the screen by George Cukor (*My Fair Lady*, 1964), illustrates this perfectly. On this topic, see Giusy Pisano, *Une archéologie du cinéma parlant* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2004).

15 See for example Daniel Bellett, *Les dernières merveilles de la science* (Paris: Garnier, n.d. [1899]); Julien Brault, *Histoire de la téléphonie et exploitation des téléphones en France et à l’étranger, le phonographe, le gramophone* (Paris: G. Masson, 1890); Théodore du Moncel, *Le téléphone, le microphone et le phonographe* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1878); Théodore du Moncel, *Le microphone, le radiophone et le phonographe* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1882); Henri Gras, *Le phonographe et le téléphone, leurs théories* (Marseille and Feissat: Académie des sciences, belles-lettres et arts de Marseille, 1882); “Il est possible d’améliorer les auditions théâtrophoniques,” *Science et Vie* 58 (September 1921): 273–7; Cécile Meadle, “Les images sonores: naissance

du Théâtre radiophonique," *Techniques et Culture* 16 (1991): 1–23; L. Montillat, *Histoire de la téléphonie* (Paris: A. Grelot, 1893); Alfred Niaudet, *Téléphones et phonographes* (Paris: J. Baudry, n.d. [ca. 1900]); Henri de Parville, *L'électricité et ses applications. Exposition de Paris* (Paris: Masson, 1882); Eugène Reynaud-Bonin, *Radio, télégraphie, téléphonie, concert* (Paris: Gauthier-Villars, n.d.); and "Le théâtrophone," *La Nature* 995 (June 25, 1892): 54–5. See also Oliver Read, *The Recording and Reproduction of Sound* (Indianapolis: H. W. Sams, 1952); Pisano, *Archéologie du cinéma parlant*; and André Lange, *Histoire de la télévision*, http://histv2.free.fr.

16 Jean-Jacques Meusy, *Paris-palaces, ou le temps des cinémas (1894–1918)* (Paris: CNRS, 1995), 15.

17 A famous advertisement for the Théâtrophone, a poster by Chéret, mentions these activities at the Musée Grévin.

18 Georges Sadoul, *Conquête du cinéma* (Paris: Librairie Gedalge, 1960), 21.

19 Patrice A. Carré, "Un développement incertain: la diffusion du téléphone en France avant 1914," *Réseaux* 9, no. 49 (1991): 27–44.

20 Patrice Flichy, *Une histoire de la communication moderne: espace public et vie privée* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), 11.

21 The scare quotes around "microphones" are necessary because the level of amplification possible at the time was very weak compared to what this term suggests today. It was more a case of maintaining the initial volume.

22 V. F. M., "Les auditions du phonographe dans la galerie des machines," *L'Exposition de Paris de 1889*, September 28, 1889, no. 39, n.p.

23 This is the principle underlying stereo transmission.

24 Du Moncel, *Le téléphone*, 125.

25 Catherine Bertho, "Naissance d'un réseau: le téléphone parisien de 1879 à 1927," *Revue française de télécommunication* 58 (March 1986): 44–54.

26 René Doncières, "Il est possible d'améliorer les auditions théâtrophoniques," *Science et Vie* 58 (September 1921): 273.

27 On the question of radio listening as a hyper-public form of listening, see Philippe Beaudoin's essential article "Le transistor et le philosophe,

pour une esthétique de l'écoute radiophonique," *Klesis, Revue philosophique* 5, no. 2 (1997), http://www.revue-klesis.org/pdf/P-Beaudoin.pdf.

28 Noël Burch, *Life To Those Shadows*, ed. and trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 33.

29 On this topic, see Giusy Pisano and Valérie Pozner, eds., *Le muet a la parole* (Paris: CNRS/AFRHC, 2005).

30 Doncières, "Il est possible d'améliorer les auditions théâtrophoniques," 273.

31 Victor Hugo, for example, wrote: "It's very curious. You put two earpieces attached to the wall over your ear and you hear an opera performance, you change earpieces and you hear the Théâtre-Français, Coquelin, etc. You change again and hear the Opéra-Comique. The children were delighted and so was I." Victor Hugo, "Choses vues" (1881), in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 16 (Paris: Éd. du Club Français du livre, 1970), 911. Marcel Proust, who was a fan of phantasmagoria, made several references to the Théâtrophone in his correspondence. He told Georges de Lauris in 1912 that "I have subscribed to the théâtrophone, which I use rarely because one hears very badly. However, for the Wagner operas, which I know almost by heart, I make up for the inadequacies of the acoustics." Marcel Proust, *Letters of Marcel Proust*, ed. and trans. by Mina Curtiss (New York: Random House, 1949), 225. Despite these obvious sound-quality problems, Proust acknowledged in a letter to his composer friend Reynaldo Hahn on February 21, 1911 that this new instrument had enabled him to get to know works such as Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*: "Yesterday on the Théâtrophone an act from the *Mastersingers* … and this evening … *Pelléas* in its entirety". Marcel Proust, *Lettres à Reynaldo Hahn*, intro. by Philippe Kolb (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), 199. Traces of this mediated listening experience are also apparent in the mise en scène of Proust's dialogues; on this topic, see Sakamato Hiroya, "Du Théâtrophone au téléphone: repenser la 'mise en scène' du dialogue dans *À la recherche du temps perdu*," *Aujourd'hui* 4 (2006): 117–25.

32 This short story has not been translated into English and this quotation from it has been translated here from the French version, "Civilisation," in

José Maria Eça de Queiroz, *Singularidades de uma rapariga loira – Une singulière jeune fille blonde*, trans. Marie-Hélène Piwnik (Paris: Folio/Gallimard, 1997), 141–221.

33 José Maria Eça de Queiroz, *The City and the Mountains*, trans. Roy Campbell (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1967), 52.

34 Ouida, *The Massarenes*, vol. 1 (1897; repr., Boston: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005), 275.

35 Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward 2000–1887* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2003), 109–10. “There are a number of music rooms in the city, perfectly adapted acoustically to the different sorts of music. These halls are connected by telephone with all the houses of the city whose people care to pay the small fee, and there are none, you may be sure, who do not. The corps of musicians attached to each hall is so large that, although no individual performer, or group of performers, has more than a brief part, each day’s programme lasts through the twenty-four hours. There are on that card for today, as you will see if you observe closely, distinct programmes of four of these concerts, each of a different order of music from the others, being now simultaneously performed, and any one of the four pieces now going on that you prefer, you can hear by merely pressing the button which will connect your house-wire with the hall where it is being rendered. The programmes are so coordinated that the pieces at any one time simultaneously proceeding in the different halls usually offer a choice, not only between instrumental and vocal, and between different sorts of instruments; but also between different motives from grave to gay, so that all tastes and moods can be suited.”

36 See Christian Delporte, “Jules Verne et le journaliste: imaginer l’information du XXe siècle,” *Le Temps des Médias* 4 (2005/1): 201–13; François Raymond, “Les machines musicales de Jules Verne: esquisse pour une esthétique vernienne,” *Romantisme* 13, no. 41 (1983): 101–14; and Remi Saumont, “Les sciences et les techniques dans l’œuvre de Jules Verne,” *Fusion* 79 (January–February 2000): 47–57.

37 Jules Verne, *La journée d’un journaliste américain en 2890* (Villelongue d’Aude: Atelier du Gué, 1978), 31. Inspired by the short story of his son Michel Verne, “In the Year 2889,” first published in *The Forum* (February 1889): 262, http://jv.gilead.org.il/pg/19362-h/.

38 Jules Verne, *Propeller Island*, ed. I. O. Evans (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press, 2008), 46–8.

39 Albert Robida, *Le vingtième siècle* (Paris: G. Decaux, 1883), 53–7.

40 See "Opera by Telephone," *Scientific American*, June 14, 1884; and Rogério Santos, *Olhos de Boneca: Uma história das telecomunicações 1880–1952* (Lisbon: Edições Colibri/Portugal Telecom, 1999), 31.

41 Alexis Belloc, *La télégraphie historique depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Fermin-Dodot, 1888), 290–1.

42 Robert Hawes, *Radio Art* (London: Green Wood, 1991). See also, for example: *Times* (London), September 3, 1891; *San Francisco Call*, September 3, 1893; *Washington Post*, June 21, 1896; *Electrical Engineer*, September 10, 1897; *San Francisco Call*, August 28, 1898; *Electrical Review*, October 5, 1901; *Science Siftings* (London), June 11, 1898, September 2, 1899, and March 24, 1900; *Telephony* (Chicago), December 1905; and *Times* (London) June 17, 1925.

43 See Erik Barnouw, *A Tower in Babel: History of Broadcasting in the United States*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966); and Charles Henry Cochrane, *The Wonders of Modern Mechanism: A Résumé of Recent Progress in Mechanical, Physical, and Engineering Processes* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1896). See also *Scientific American*, June 22, 1907; *Electrical Review*, July 5, 1890 and March 23, 1907; *Telephony*, April 1906; *New York Times*, October 24, 1911; *Lewiston Journal*, September 15, 1911; *Los Angeles Times*, August 24, 1911; *Oregon Daily Journal*, June 27, 1912; *Portland Sunday Journal*, June 30, 1912; *Portland Oregonian*, May 13, 1913; *Telephony*, October 11, 1913; *Electrical Word*, August 2, 1913; *Music Trade Review*, February 21, 1914; *Baltimore Sun*, January 26, 1908; *Telephony*, December 18, 1909; *Edison Monthly*, September 1912; *Electrical Review*, September 6, 1884; *American Telephone Journal*, September 3, 1903; *Telephony*, January 4, 1919; etc.

44 "New and Opera over Telephone," *Montreal Gazette*, January 12, 1911, 1. http://earlyradiohistory.us/1911thmo.htm.

45 See *Electrical Review*, April 7, 1893, 9; *Electrical Engineer*, May 12, 1893; *Electrical Word*, March 18, 1893 and November 4, 1893; *Scientific American*, June 22, 1897; *Daily Chronicle*, September 27, 1895; *Harper's*

Weekly, September 28, 1895; *Electrical Engineer, London* 257 (September 6, 1895); *Telephony*, March 30, 1912; *World's Work*, April 1901. Hungarian Telecom Portal, "The History of the 'telefonhírmondó'", http://www.puskas.matav.hu/english/telefonhirmondo.html; Irving Fang, *A History of Mass Communication* (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 1997), 87–8; and Asa Briggs, "The Pleasure Telephone: A Chapter in the Prehistory of the Media," in Ithiel de Sola Pool, ed., *The Social Impact of the Telephone* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977), 40–65.

46 In my research, I have found records of a lawsuit won by Verdi against the Brussels Théâtrophone company for broadcasting one of his operas. In addition, in the archives of the Société des auteurs compositeurs dramatiques (SACD) in France, in the collection "Perception et répartition," there is a file on "Radiophonie et Théâtrophone." The Théâtrophone evidently ran up against a problem which has not gone away since.

47 André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, "Il cinema è morto, ancora! Un medium e le sue crisi d'identità …," in Francesco Casetti, Jane Gaines, and Valentina Re, eds., *Dall'inizio, alla fine. Teorie del cinema in prospettiva / In the Very Beginning, at the Very End. Film Theories in Perspective* (Udine: Forum, 2010), 136.

48 Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New*, 231. See also Tim Crook, *Radio Drama* (London: Routledge, 1999), 15–20.

49 An Nguyen, "The Interaction between Technologies and Society: Lessons Learnt from 160 Evolutionary Years of Online News Services," *First Monday* 12, nos. 3–5 (2007); and Paul Collins, "Theatrophone – The 19th-Century iPod," *New Scientist* 2638 (January 12, 2008).

50 On this topic, see Giusy Pisano, "L'introduction du microphone dans le processus de création artistique: une approche anthropologique des relations entre arts et technique," in Leonardo Quaresima, Laura Ester Sangalli, and Federico Zecca, eds., *Le età dei cinema. Criteri e modelli di periodizzazione / The Ages of the Cinema: Criteria and Models for the Construction of Historical Periods* (Udine: Forum, 2008), 411–28.

51 "Gran Opera by Wireless," *Telephony*, March 5, 1910, 293.

52 "The Story of Lee De Forest," *Electrical Experimenter*, December 1916, 561.

53 Paul Deharme, “Propositions pour un art radiophonique,” *La N.R.F*. 174 (March 1, 1928): 415.

54 Kira Kitsopanidou, “L’innovation technologique dans l’industrie cinématographique hollywoodienne: le cinéma-spectacle des années 1950: une mise en perspective des stratégies liées à l’Eidophor et au Cinémascope” (PhD diss., Université Paris 3, 2002).

55 The first RCA Theater TV presentation took place in 1929 at the RKO Proctor Theater in New York. The definition of the television image was 48 lines, using a mechanical scanner. Over the next twenty years, RCA tried to develop high-powered Kinescopes to replace the mechanical disc scanner and improve the optical parts of the device. Its research gave rise to rapid improvements in the system between 1937 and 1940. See the *Journal of the SMPTE* 56 (March 1951): 317.

56 In the late 1940s, Twentieth Century-Fox and Paramount studied this possibility, but the idea of video broadcasting films in movie theaters met with the opposition of exhibitors. The National Exhibitors Theater Television Committee approved it only in exceptional circumstances. See *Variety*, February 18, 1953: 7.

57 “Theater Television Progress,” *Journal of the SMPTE* 59 (August 1952): 140.

58 Kira Kitsopanidou, “The Widescreen Revolution and 20th Century Fox’s Eidophor in the 1950s,” *Film History* 15 (2003): 32–56.

59 Raoul Roverato (head of business development at Orange Vallée), “Télécom et création: une union aussi indispensable que profitable,” *La lettre de l’autorité de régulation des Communications électroniques et des Postes*, September–October 2008, 13.

60 Gaudreault and Marion, “Il cinema è morto, ancora!,” 140.

61 Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 182.

6

The “Silent” Arts

Modern Pantomime and the Making of an Art Cinema in Belle Époque Paris

The Case of Georges Wague and Germaine Dulac

Tami Williams

In early twentieth-century Paris, both cinema and pantomime were attributed the moniker “silent” art. Yet, in this period of rapid modernization and shifting aesthetic hierarchies, their shared characteristics go beyond this simple designation. Alongside the emergence of the motion picture, a pervasive “visual primacy” and a “crisis of the word” could be discerned across literary and artistic domains.[1] In this context, the first, more established “silent” art of pantomime underwent its own transformations, principally in terms of narrative and performance style. While its influence on the new “silent” art of cinema has been widely dismissed, their connections, particularly during the latter’s crucial phase of narrative integration with its subsequent aesthetic orientations, merit examination. A preliminary look at the conceptual debates on wordlessness and symbolist gesture linking these arts opens up new research perspectives.

French discourse on modern pantomime from 1908 through the war anticipates and accompanies that of art cinema into the 1920s. It announces the way in which cinema would be discussed in the 1910s and after the war, particularly in the “Impressionist” and “pure cinema” movements. This is

exemplified by the case of pioneer filmmaker and theorist Germaine Dulac, who, in her extensive engagement with the arts, had befriended Georges Wague, a key figure in the modernization of pantomime. Like many French filmmakers of the 1910s and 1920s (Delluc, L'Herbier, Baroncelli), Dulac had worked as a theater critic (1906–13) before going on to make films (1917–36),[2] and Wague had been in contact with her and her husband Albert Dulac from the teens through the late 1930s. Similarities can be seen between Wague's conception of modern pantomime and Dulac's notion of a "pure cinema," from its most figurative to its most abstract manifestations, as rooted in life, movement, rhythm, and sensation. Their shared discourse around issues of wordlessness, narrativity, performance, and symbolist aesthetics is revealing. It suggests a need for further research into the broad intersections between modern pantomime and an emerging art cinema.

The Art of Running History Backwards

As film historian and theorist Tom Gunning has shown, most recently in his work on stillness and movement from a "cinema of attractions" to a "montage of attractions" and back, there is much to gain in "running history backwards."[3] For a scholar of 1920s French film writing on early cinema, such a gesture of looking back is both inevitable and beneficial.[4] Of course, in the case of early cinema, which is characterized by what Laurent Guido calls "spontaneous" intermediality, these traces and implications are not always apparent outright.[5] For instance, a film such as *Dans l'Hellade* (*In Ancient Greece*, Pathé, 1909), which features the striking sinuous and arabesque-like poses of dancer and actress Stasia Napierkowska, an early muse of avant-garde filmmaker Dulac, gains new and added relevance when viewed in light of the director's "Impressionist" and "pure" films (1919–29).[6] For example, from Dulac's early symbolist use of figurative gestures integrated into the narrative to her subsequent inclination toward minimalist abstraction in less narrative forms, this arabesque-like gesture

becomes a key motif indicating female liberation.[7] As Richard Abel reminds us, while only a fraction of pre-war French films survive in an accessible form, interrogating extant films and their traces allows us to recognize "the conditions of their circulation and articulation as cultural forms."[8] With respect to pantomime, an excavation of written and iconographic traces of the "body as archive" is similarly revealing of such conditions. In response to Jacques Derrida's question "What becomes of the archive when it is written on the body itself?" dance historian Laurence Louppe writes, "The dancer doesn't seek to respond: she intensifies with her very gesture the enigma of the inscription."[9] An analysis of these enigmatically inscribed gestures and their traces and a critical glance backwards, across distinct time periods and arts, allow a different narrative of early cinema to emerge.

The Modernization of the Arts in Belle Époque France

In looking back at the early period from the 1920s, particularly through the lens of Impressionist cinema and the related "pure cinema" movement, different objects appear in the mirror. The role of the classical visual, literary, and performing arts (painting, literature, and theater) as sources of influence on the emerging motion picture medium has been widely established.[10] Yet even silent-era filmmakers, theorists, and critics elide the differences between the "traditional" or "classical" and the "modern," when it comes to performance arts such as pantomime (or symbolist theater) and their impact on the burgeoning medium.[11] Such elisions can be seen in a range of early cinephilic discourses on intermediality, from Ricciotto Canudo's view of cinema as a "synthesis" of the arts in "La naissance d'un sixième art: Essai sur le cinématographe" ("The Birth of a Sixth Art," 1911) and Abel Gance's "Qu'est-ce que le cinématographe? Un Sixième Art" ("A Sixth Art," 1912) to the chorus of "pure cinema" propositions epitomized by Henri Chomette's film *Cinq minutes du cinéma pur* (Five minutes of

pure cinema, 1926) and Germaine Dulac's frequent calls for a cinema free from the "shackles" of the other arts.[12] While within this range of perspectives exception is made for the musical analogy (and by association the art of dance), frequent opposition is made to established forms of literature (story), theater (decor) and, by narrative correlation, pantomime.[13] This generalized opposition to traditional literature, theater, and pantomime in art cinema discourse obscures the assimilation of their more modern symbolist forms into cinema as a visual art.[14]

Until recently, contemporary scholars have tended to emphasize cinema's relationship to classical literary and theatrical practices. Such approaches have proven most fruitful in the American context, particularly in the pioneering work of Lea Jacobs and Ben Brewster on nineteenth-century stage pictorialism and cinema, as well as in Roberta Pearson's groundbreaking study of the shift from histrionic to verisimilar performance styles in Griffith's Biograph films (1908–13).[15] Of interest here are the distinctively modernist trends that emerged on the other side of the Atlantic, and particularly in turn-of-the-century Paris, where the performance arts (i.e., pantomime, theater, and dance) all underwent extensive renovation. Of these trends, modern pantomime (like symbolist theater) has received less attention. One might attribute the dismissal of modern forms of pantomime, and its relevance for art cinema, in part to its less prevalent role in the United States during this period. Secondary French accounts, however, also tend to downplay its significance.[16] Jean Mitry, for example, in his article "Histoire sans paroles" (History without words) excludes it based on its "abstract" or "symbolically figured gestures."[17] Brewster and Jacobs suggest that its methods were limited to the "early years" for the communication of basic story information.[18] Yet, modern pantomime did not disappear as early as such accounts seem to suggest. As Jon Burrows asserts in his excellent book *Legitimate Cinema: Theater Stars in Silent British Films, 1908–1918*, most film histories do not account for a widespread and "pronounced interest" in trade papers in the continental art of mime and "specific calls by producers to emulate and adapt the stylistic principles of authentic pantomime" that extend into the 1910s.[19] As

Burrows notes, it is difficult to measure the impact of this discursive preoccupation with pantomime on film production due to poor survival rates of prints in the transitional era. Nonetheless, recent work by European scholars, such as Laurent Guido and Ariane Martinez, has begun to address these differences, as well as the common intermediality of cinema and pantomime in the French context.[20] Of particular interest are the intersecting modalities of wordlessness and visual primacy in pantomime as they relate to the development of an art cinema in France.

The "Silent" Arts: Concepts of Wordlessness

It is important to note that unlike its English-language descriptor "silent" cinema, the motion picture medium in France and Italy, for example, like pantomime, has long been designated not as "silent," but as "mute" or "wordless" (*cinéma muet* and *cinema muto*, respectively). Indeed, pantomime, like silent cinema, was almost always accompanied by music. Yet, it is not this auditory (non-verbal or musical) distinction that is relevant here, as much as the precise connotations that this "wordlessness" (and perhaps perceived "silence") carries with respect to the objectives of the arts themselves.

Like its English-language correlative "wordlessness," "muet" can be read in a wide variety of contexts, from the aesthetic to the sociopolitical, as a call to gesture, whether literal or figurative.[21] In the context of cinema, scholar Gertrud Koch distinguishes the relationship between voice and screen as an act of "mimetic transference," in which there is always, even with sound cinema's recording or dubbing, a voice–body divide.[22] Similarly, Jonathan Auerbach, in his fascinating work on the "kinetics of vocalization" (early cinema's visual registering of sound by way of mouth and lips), posits early cinema's silence or wordlessness not only as separation but also as a perceived *lack*, albeit one that constructively consolidates our attention on the body in cinema.[23]

In contrast, feminist film scholar Jane Gaines productively shifts our perspective from a *literary* position of *verbal primacy* in which "wordlessness" is characterized as "lack" to a *cinematic* one of *visual primacy*. For Gaines, the *literary* position is characterized by a recourse to mute gestures, gestures used "for want of words," as exemplified by the work of Peter Brooks. A *cinematic* approach upholds gesture as an alternative to excess or "too many words" (e.g., the exquisite work of Danish actress Asta Nielsen, the 1910s and 1920s US screenwriter and director Stanner E. V. Taylor, and theater critic and film enthusiast Robert Grau, author of *The Lure of the Silent Drama*), hailed by "pure cinema" proponents (e.g., Balázs, Dulac, Epstein) with their "exemplary contempt for the word." Related to this are the calls for a disciplined use, not of sound as much as spoken dialogue that does not detract from the medium's specific visual qualities (e.g., by that of directors such as Eisenstein, Chaplin, Clair, and Hitchcock).[24] Gaines aptly relates this opposition to that of the verbal and visual in today's cultures of "texting" and "streaming" or the "sending of so many images without words."[25] This perspective on "wordlessness" is useful in understanding the way in which early twentieth-century modern pantomime (like symbolist theater and dance) plays into the development of an art cinema in 1910s and 1920s France. Moreover, it should be noted that this discourse on pantomime, like that of certain intentionally wordless (such as "pure" or "art") cinemas, is not unrelated to the *relative* wordless nature of *some* contemporary global cinema, which the film critic known as Harry Tuttle (pseudonym) has called "contemporary contemplative cinema."[26]

It is well established that early twentieth-century France was dominated by an impulse of visual primacy (or a culture of the "image" in the face of a "crisis of the word") that was not independent from the advent of cinema.[27] For example, the end of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a new discursive trend in journalistic reportage emphasizing observation, information, and narration via eyewitness accounts of public life.[28] Similarly, in the domain of the music hall, the enduring silent stillness of the *tableau vivant* epitomized the tension between representation and visual abstraction that was developing in photography, painting, and theater

alike.[29] Indeed, from Mallarmé's imagistic poetry to the willful separation of word and image in Lugné-Poe's symbolist theater, this transformation can be seen across the arts. With such shifts, as Belle Époque cultural historian Michael Biddiss notes, "the significance of non-verbal means of communicating ideas was potentially enhanced."[30] Marcel L'Herbier, in his 1917 article "Hermès et le Silence" ("Hermes and Silence"), similarly praises the power and subtlety of this "silent, popular, [and] faithful" life-printing-machine for its triumph over speech, while acknowledging the widespread excesses of such enthusiasm in this domain at that time.[31] Pantomime evolved alongside cinema in this dynamic intermedial and modernist context. At the same time, there was tremendous movement amongst these domains.

Pantomime and Cinema: A Shared Intermediality

In recent decades, film historians have shed a great deal of light on early cinema's rich intermediality, particularly with respect to vaudeville, literature, theater and, most recently, dance. In Belle Époque Paris, pantomime in its prolific and various forms, from the ballet-pantomime to the more theatrically conceived mime-drama, has a similarly wide-ranging history that interacts with vaudeville, opera, theater, dance, and cinema.[32] From classically schooled mime artists Séverin (1863–1930), known for bringing *commedia dell'arte* icon Pierrot into the twentieth century, and Farina (né Jules-Maurice Chevalier, 1883–1943) to mime and opera star Félicia Mallet (1863–1928) and her protégé, modern mime innovator, theorist, and film actor Georges Wague (1874–1965), pantomime featured a wide array of artists, many of whom moved freely between these different domains and the cinema.[33] Alongside these foundational figures were mime-turned-symbolist dancer Loïe Fuller, Ballets Russes dancer and mime extraordinaire Ida Rubinstein, and provocative mime artist and author Colette.[34] As relevant as the tremendous movement of artists between

pantomime and cinema is their shared discourse. Both pantomime and cinema have ties with one of the earliest syntactically codified visual languages: the language of signs.

Pantomime, Cinema, and the Language of Signs: Early Abstraction

The basic capacity of pantomime and cinema for abstraction, which is at the core of their synthetic means of expression, is one that is shared with sign language. The tremendous crossover in vocabulary and discourse between these arts and the "language of signs," as evidenced by Léon Vaisse's published speech *De la Pantomime comme langage naturel et moyen d'instruction du sourd-muet* (On pantomime as a natural language and means of instruction for the deaf-mute, 1854), merits attention, even briefly.[35] Significantly, Vaisse describes sign language as a *language of abstraction* "rooted in pantomime," which in the domain of moral, philosophical, or spiritual ideas can easily go beyond the material movement of gesture to penetrate the mind.

In a demonstration that brings to mind 1920 montage theories (especially of Soviet filmmakers and theorists Vsevolod Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein, but which is also evocative of French Impressionist cinema), Vaisse, using composite expressions and an inspired etymology, outlines how gestures can be grouped around a certain number of abstract word stems, both literal and figurative. These etymological derivations are capable of a multitude of combinations comparable to those composed through Chinese hieroglyphs. For instance, according to Vaisse, "blood boiling in the chest" indicates anger; a "swelling of the heart" signifies pride; and alternating and directed hand movements can be used to figure a "commerce of hearts" or friendship.[36] While detractors tend to refer to this composed language negatively to critique the word-based limitations of classical pantomime, modernist filmmakers such as Germaine Dulac use it

positively to refer to cinema's ability to be understood broadly and without words. The shared capacity of these non-verbal languages for gestural abstraction is one of many vital elements that would prove crucial to their broader artistic purview.

"Classical" Pantomime and Early Cinema: From Adaptation to Integration

Not surprisingly, many key players of early cinema perceived pantomime, a "silent" visual art, as a propitious model for the new medium trying to gain legitimacy in the face of the other arts. By 1908, a time when cinema was turning to existing narrative forms in literature and theater, the renowned Film d'art company had brought to the screen a number of pantomimes that had been successful in the Parisian theatrical circuit. As film historian Ariane Martinez notes, this turn to pantomime can be explained, at least in part, by the ease with which these works could be adapted. She cites three major factors: duration, musical compatibility, and the absence of verbal enunciation. First, pantomimes were *short*. Often shown at the beginning of a program, their brief forms and condensed plots suited the reduced lengths of films of the period. Second, they could be "embellished" with a *musical accompaniment* that highlighted the action and emotional states of the characters. And finally, since they were wordless in origin, there was *no temptation to translate the word* or to present it explicitly. Of this incentive, Martinez writes, "the Film d'art aspired to hide the temptation of the word or to make cinema an amputated theater in which actors move their lips without making a sound." Citing art critic Richard Cantinelli on the 1908 Film d'art production *L'empreinte, ou La main rouge* (The hand-print, or caught red-handed, 1908), with its battery of young stars (Séverin, Napierkowska, and French actress and singer Mistinguett), Martinez shows that the wordless – if demonstrative – acting of mimes was considered the "most appropriate means" of serving the silent screen: "I think, as I see more and more films, that mimes will be a great help. For it must be said

that nothing is more annoying than watching actors move their lips without emitting a sound. The explicit acting of Séverin, while somewhat vulgar, is also highly imaginative and instrumental to the interest that *la main rouge* can have for the general public."[37]

Séverin's more classical method coincided with the broad, isolated, and self-consciously stylized gestures of theater's "histrionic" code outlined by Pearson, and which persisted in American Biograph films as late as 1912.[38] Despite its wordless clarity and slower and more measured delivery, characteristic of certain modernist techniques (in modern dance for example), the exaggerated or crude quality of Séverin's style (much like the quick and broad gestures of the "histrionic" code) seems to have been the principal target of criticism. According to René Jeanne's 1922 article "La Pantomime et le Cinéma," it is only after the war, in his early 1920s performances, that Séverin broke from the old school of "multiple, rounded gestures."[39]

Yet, just as Séverin was carrying these gestures into cinema during a crucial phase in its narrative integration, Georges Wague was pushing mime beyond the demonstrative "Marseille-based" and Italian-inspired school with which Séverin was associated.[40] In a 1910 article entitled "La Pantomime moderne," Wague refutes the conflation of this classical, Italian-based tradition with new modern tendencies. Further, he emphasizes this classical–modern divide, while citing a demand for pantomime lessons at the school where he taught:

> Critics and artists are calling for the creation of a Conservatory course in mime. A course not only for "specialists" but also for actors and singers, despite the obstinate detractors who rehash arguments against what they call the "theater of the deaf" … arguments I find excellent, my God, yes (!), because it is not Pantomime they are addressing, but a certain form of pantomime that I find execrable, that which is referred to as classical [*sic*].[41]

According to most accounts, including that of Wague, who called it "the-decadence of applied formula," the "classical" school had begun with Gaspard Debureau (1796–1846) and his successors Charles Debureau (1829–73) and Paul Legrand (1816–98), collectively known for importing

and reinterpreting the sixteenth-century Italian *commedia dell'arte* tradition.[42] This tradition, extended by the late nineteenth-century "Marseillaise" school, which also drew on contemporary Italian mime (Bernardi, Bighettie, Thalès), ended with Legrand and Séverin. Legrand worked with literary writers to establish the theatrical society *Le Cercle Funambulesque* (1888–98) and Séverin founded his own repertory theater, *Les Funambules* (1898–9), in honor of Debureau. Credited with modernizing the Pierrot character in his great success *'Chand d'habits* (Clothes merchant, 1896), and as a worker in *Conscience* (1899), Séverin was nonetheless one of the primary defenders of the classical pantomime form during the Belle Époque era. In contrast, Georges Wague spoke out actively against this classical and formulaic Pierrot-centered tradition. After his 1893 debut in Xavier Privas's *Cantomimes* ("mimed songs" with singer and piano) at Café Procope, and under the tutelage of independent mime Félicia Mallet, Wague began to carve out his own distinctive path.[43]

Not surprisingly, and in light of his particular musical beginnings, Wague locates the transition from "classical" to "modern" pantomime around the art's controversial relationship to the "word." While classical pantomime, unlike early cinema, rejected any temptation to mouth the word (as literary scholar Boris Eichenbaum put it, "The actors pronounced phrases we couldn't hear!"), it was still criticized for its perceived endeavor to interpret individual words and phrases.[44] In a 1908 interview for the journal *Comoedia*, contrasting the Italian or "classical" school and the newly emerging "modern" French school, Wague notes, "The first school – that of the Italian tradition – has one great fault that kills the rest. That is, it has at its disposition a fairly limited number of restrained movements of which many are purely conventional – a sort of mute alphabet." He adds, "The public can't understand these without being initiated."[45] For Wague, the trouble with the "classical" tradition was that it employed a regional and word-based system of signs. This possible silent precursor to the dialect films of Marseillaise director Marcel Pagnol relied on "conventional and popular language," which as Wague states was "composed of a certain number of gestures each translating a common word" that only "well-versed spectators" could understand.[46]

While classical pantomime, as Ariane Martinez has argued, offered the new "silent" art a certain facility of adaptation, the modern and more natural qualities that Wague championed are what allow for its eventual integration into cinema. According to Wague's accounts, the "modern" school shifted toward a more comprehensive performance technique that integrated more subtle body and facial expression. He declares, "The new school – the French one – is more sober and true. It endeavors to depict a feeling or state of mind solely through the general attitude of the body and the expressions that the extraordinary mobility [or changing quality] of the face makes almost unlimited. All of these felt impressions find ample reflection – so to speak – in the facial features that they infinitely modify, change and transform."[47] He asks, "All of the dramatic arts have changed, why not pantomime?"[48]

Modern Pantomime: The Case of Georges Wague and Germaine Dulac

Georges Wague and theater critic-turned-filmmaker Germaine Dulac each played a key role in modernizing their respective arts. Wague, who crossed paths with Dulac and her producer and husband Albert in the 1910s, is a quintessential example of the mobility and versatility of artists working in vaudeville, opera or lyric theater, dance and, soon, cinema during its period of modernization.[49] Alongside countless pantomimes performed on stage (e.g., *Scaramouche*, *Barbe Bluette*, *L'homme aux poupées*) and silent roles in operas (e.g., *Jeanne d'Arc*, *Salomé*), Wague appeared in over forty motion pictures between 1907 and 1922, under directors such as Louis Feuillade, Ferdinand Zecca, Henri Diamant-Berger, and Jacques de Baroncelli, including several, between 1910 and 1912, with Dulac's muse and intimate friend during this period, the dancer, mime, and actress Stasia Napierkowska (b. 1891).[50] In 1912 Wague also starred as the senile and lustful King Herod in the ubiquitously produced ballet *Salomé*, alongside

mime Christine Kerf (as Queen Hérodiade) and dancer and mime Ida Rubinstein (as Salomé), who had come to Paris with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in 1909, and whom Dulac would use as a model for several of her films (in particular one of her earliest films, *Vénus Victrix*, 1917).

Wague on Stage: Gestural Abstraction

Wague's performance in the 1912 ballet *Salomé* gives us some clues to his pantomimic style and technique. In contrast to recent renditions in which Herod had been portrayed violently tearing off the veils of a fleeing Salomé, Wague chose to embody the character's phases of passion and lust through a display of the "immobility" of contrasting, yet restrained poses coupled with more deliberate and contemplative facial expressions.[51] His biographer Tristan Rémy notes that Wague, with his psychologically tragic and disciplined mask, maintained the same level of dramatic intensity that Ida Rubinstein developed in the choreographic domain. First Rémy asserts, "Neither Christine Kerf, nor [Wague], appeared as mere stooges, silent witnesses of some ballet. They participated as true mimes giving impressive relief to their characters, without needless gestures." Paraphrasing a review by Paul Souday, literary critic for *Le Temps*, Rémy adds that Rubinstein, who performed without music, was also more effective in miming slow, evocative, and harmonious gestures than she was with the rapid dance moves of the final stages of her performance.[52] Yet, what this 1912 performance exhibits, like many others of this period, is not only the intrinsic intermediality of pantomime itself, but also the use of symbolist figuration and abstraction that would reappear in "pure cinema" a few years later. Wague's contemplative expressions, coupled with immobile and restrained poses, locate his performance somewhere between the demonstrative histrionic style and the realist verisimilar style delineated by Pearson. These abstract gestures, combined with minimalist decors and sound design, would become a key element in 1920s "Impressionist" and "pure" or "abstract" cinema.

“Modern” Pantomime and “Pure” Cinema: A Shared “Visibilization”

If we compare the modern pantomimic discourse of Wague and his comrades to that of “pure cinema” proponent Germaine Dulac, we can see a similar vocabulary and shared concepts ranging from a defense of “wordlessness” and observation (versus a filmed text or intertitles) to a predilection for limited narrativity, a preference for natural settings over studio decors, an emphasis on “inner” versus “outer” movement or action versus “agitation,” and a shared orientation toward “symbolist figuration,” rhythmic flow, and sensation.[53] The key concepts of Wague and other modernists like Farina are close not only to the discourse of modern dancers of the era (e.g., Isadora Duncan and Loïe Fuller), but also to that used by Dulac in defining what she saw as the essence of cinema, that is, life, movement, and rhythm.[54]

This basis in the figuration of “life itself” is a key component of the 1920s avant-garde. For example, Dulac’s earliest cinema articles, “Mise en scène” (1917) and “Où sont les interprètes?” (Where are the actors?, 1918), which call for the use of “natural decors” and “non-professional actors,” are not far from mime artist Farina’s retrospective acclamation of a certain kind of scenic minimalism.[55] In an article entitled “De la pantomime au Cinéma” (Pantomime to cinema, 1919), Farina, who calls the new “silent” art “the daughter of pantomime,” emphasizes what he considers the fundamentals of both arts: maintaining “the simplicity of the subject,” “proximity to nature of the subject,” and “restrained and natural acting.”[56]

In her debates on “pure cinema,” Dulac emphasizes cinema’s basis in life and nature most forcefully when distinguishing her approach from other “abstract” filmmakers such as Viking Eggeling, Hans Richter, and Walter Ruttmann, with whom she otherwise associated. In her article “Du sentiment à la ligne” (From sentiment to line), published in February 1927 in the first and sole issue of her journal *Schémas*, Dulac responded to two preceding articles (Miklos Bandi’s “La Symphonie de Viking Eggeling” and Hans Richter’s “Mouvement”), which supported the non-figurative and

non-referential approach founded in abstract painting. In contrast to her associates, Dulac, in keeping with her earliest writings on film, defends the notion that the "cinegraphic" is present in life's most tangible forms.[57] This notion of the cinegraphic based in "life itself" can be seen in her description of the dramatically burgeoning tendrils of a plant in her article "Du sentiment à la ligne," just as in her figurative and abstract films with their frequent figuration of a female protagonist, arms outstretched in an arabesque-like form, signifying liberation.[58]

Similarly, Dulac's key concepts of movement and rhythm, as well as the notion of "visualization,"[59] can also be found in Wague's principal texts. For example, in his 1910 article "La Pantomime moderne," we see the debates concerning pantomime shift from the "classical" domain (and the use of gestures "for want of words") to that of the *visual*, *rhythmic*, and *sensorial*, central to 1920s "pure" cinema. Wague writes that the goal of modern pantomime is to "represent movements of thought, struggles of conscience and secret sensations." He continues, "It aims to externalize the inner being, which in everyday life, for want of adequate words, would only be expressed by spasms or cries, and which, in the magic of the theater, can perfectly find its admirable *visibilisation* (visualization) in the infinite resources of pantomime, the mirage of its physiognomic realisms and its pathetic rhythms."[60]

Just as Dulac privileges "inner movement" over "outer movement," Wague maintains that gesture as an expressive form must always be an effect of thought: "Without thought, gesture is useless. Gesture is only a complement of thought. A minimum of gestures corresponds to a maximum of expression."[61]

Beyond Word and Phrase: An Impressionist Proposal

Like the proposition of Dulac (along with other "Impressionist" or "pure film" proponents such as Fernand Léger) to reduce the work's story

element, Wague suggests a need for texts that are based less on a detailed plot or narrative than on an overall premise and a series of emotions: “the pantomime we serve demands authors who work for it, a serious study of what it can provide, and a good knowledge of its means and objectives: instead of a text to translate literally, we ask them to provide an action and suite of sentiments, and to avoid the mistake of proposing words that are inexpressible by gestures, when it is the gestures we must ask to exteriorize *all* that is inexpressible by words.”[62]

Not surprisingly, both Dulac and Wague, in their discussions, turn to the musical analogy to convey the “inexpressible.”[63] Noting pantomime’s use of a “field of expression more vast than simple language” to convey sentiments, or what he refers to as the *au-delà* (the beyond) of expression, Wague writes that “outside of the domain of musical penetration and that of poetry and verbal prose lies another unperformed *beyond* of expressions.” In a passage that anticipates an oft-cited description of Gance’s celebrated montage sequence in *La Roue* (*The Wheel*, 1922) from Dulac’s 1924 article “Mouvement, créateur d’action” (Movement, creator of action), Wague remarks, “With the blaze of a look, the cadence of a step, a torso rotation, a wrinkling of features, a mime artist can characterize ulterior motives such as hatred, remorse, desire, enjoyment or disgust, which the most warmly described and dramatically well stated phrases can only superficially provide.”[64] Dulac’s description of Gance’s sequence speeds up this rhythm. She writes:

> A locomotive driven by a jealous man of exacerbated passion for whom nothing matters, not his own life, nor that of others, and who carries the woman he loves with him to his hostile destiny. Abel Gance expresses the ferocity and grandeur of this love in the details of movement: speed, rhythm, the darkness of a tunnel, light, a whistle, trepidation of wheels, brief visions of expressions of opposing sentiments, and sudden calm, the majestic and normal arrival of the locomotive in the station. A man dominates the panic of his brain and his heart. Movement of eyes, of wheels, landscapes, quarter notes, pauses, half notes, sixteenth notes, visual orchestration combination: cinema![65]

Like Dulac, Wague saw visualization through condensed facial expression and rhythmic gesture as the source of a deeply shared intermedial connection with the other arts and the foundation for a collective and transcendental form of communication.[66] Such an approach is not unrelated to that of certain types of symbolist theater, namely that of Lugné-Poe and Maeterlinck, where the word was made independent of the visual scene and in which gesture and scenic design prevailed. While Dulac chose Lugné-Poe's wife and symbolist muse Suzanne Desprès to star in her first film, *Les soeurs ennemies* (The enemy sisters, 1917), Maeterlinck's muse and companion Georgette Leblanc (who gave Colette her first pantomime role) became 1920s French Impressionist filmmaker Marcel L'Herbier's go-to lead. Citing the pantomime-based work of theater directors such as Sacha Guitry, as well as that of Japanese actor Sada Yacco, who performed at the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris, Georges Wague also upheld figurative gesture as the basis for a certain kind of universality or an ability to communicate across cultures, just as Dulac (much like L'Herbier) would later with respect to her late 1920s abstract films, which adapted the musical works of Chopin and Debussy to the screen, and in her early 1930s international newsreels, despite the arrival of synchronized sound.[67]

These similarities considered, it is not surprising that in 1922 Wague expressed his view of cinema, with its condensed figurations, as an extension of mime.[68] If pantomimic gesture is cut off in its minimalist abstraction from the more naturalist and verisimilar performance modes privileged by a classical continuity based performance style, it seems to reappear in the form of figurative gesture, with its links to symbolist theater and modern dance, as "attraction," to return to Gunning's term, in avant-garde cinema of the 1920s. The unique connection between early cinema and modern pantomime, with their shared modes of wordlessness and symbolist figuration and in light of an extensive and newly visible filmography, merits renewed consideration and broader examination in the field of film studies.

Notes

1 Alongside the emergence of the motion picture, a “visual turn” could be discerned in many different areas of French culture, from the advent of a reportage-style journalism to the modernist symbolist theater of Lugné-Poe, in which the visual scene and spoken word were split apart, the off-stage voice becoming a decorative element bearing the same weight as others in the scene. Despite varying perspectives on the precise nature and effects of “visual culture,” historians and cultural theorists from Vanessa Schwartz and Angela Della Vacche to Martin Jay and W. J. T. Mitchell have nuanced what has been called the “visual turn” or the shift in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from a “linguistic” to a “visual” culture. For further information on the French context, see for example Vanessa Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004); and Angela Della Vacche, *The Visual Turn: Classical Film Theory and Art History* (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

2 After interviewing actress Réjane in 1906 for the women’s weekly *La Française*, Dulac wrote a regular weekly column called “Figures d’autrefois et aujourd’hui” (Figures of yesterday and today). From 1908 to 1913, Dulac reviewed more than 160 plays, ranging from light comedies to psychological dramas in Paris theaters – from the popular Opéra-Comique and the classical Comédie-Française and Théâtre du Palais-Royal to the reformist, avant-garde Théâtre de l’oeuvre, founded by Lugné-Poe. The influence of Lugné-Poe’s symbolist theater on cinema is addressed in my forthcoming monograph on Dulac (University of Illinois Press). Dulac signed this first article “G. De l’Estang,” a pseudonym that she would use principally for her theater reviews beginning on October 11, 1908. A large number of Dulac’s articles for *La Française*, as well as a few other theater journals, are collected in her personal archive. Dulac, “Le théâtre ou les théâtres,” GD 4490, BiFi (Bibliothèque du Film, Paris).

3 Tom Gunning, “From the Cinema of Attractions to the Montage of Attractions: The Art of Running Film History Backwards” (plenary address, First International Berkeley Conference on Silent Cinema, University of California, Berkeley, February 24, 2011).

4 My own work on the 1920s cinematic avant-garde pioneer Germaine Dulac, whose career spans the years 1906 to 1942, imposes its own

temporal trajectory which requires both a looking back and a looking forward that the filmmaker herself undertook in her writings and films. See for example Dulac's article "Comment je suis devenue 'metteur en scène' cinématographique," *Ève*, August 31, 1924; reprinted in Germaine Dulac, *Écrits sur le cinéma (1919–1937)*, ed. Prosper Hillairet (Paris: Éditions Paris expérimental, 1994), 42–4. Similarly, Dulac's deeply pacifist interwar archival film *Le cinéma au service de l'histoire* (Cinema in the service of history, 1935) makes a sternly pedagogical gesture in linking the tragic war of the past and the looming dangers of dominant nationalist ideologies for the future.

5 Laurent Guido, citing André Gaudreault, refers to both a "spontaneous" and a "negotiated" intermediality (or the "juxtaposition" or "integration" of acts from diverse forms of scenic performances). Laurent Guido, "L'attraction musicale au cinéma: perspectives de recherche," *1895* 56 (December 2008): 149. See also André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, "A Medium is Always Born Twice …," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2005): 3–15.

6 Such gestures also have bearing on lost wartime projects, such as Dulac's short pantomime ballet *Trois pantins pour une poupée* (Three puppets for a doll, 1918), which fall between the cracks of the customary periodizations of "early cinema" (1895–1914) and the "1920s avant-garde (1919–29), and whose "early" aesthetics carry the forms and themes of the next. Special thanks to Céline Pozzi at the Cineteca di Bologna for facilitating a special screening of *Dans l'Hellade*.

7 See my articles: Tami Williams, "Dancing with Light: Choreographies of Gender in the Cinema of Germaine Dulac," in *Avant-Garde Film*, eds. Dietrich Scheunemann and Alexander Graf (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2007), 121–32; and "Toward the Development of a Modern 'Impressionist' Cinema: Germaine Dulac's *La belle dame sans merci* (1921) and the Deconstruction of the Femme Fatale Archetype," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 51, no. 2 (2010): 404–19.

8 Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), xviii.

9 Laurence Louppe, *L'histoire de la danse, repères dans le cadre du diplôme d'État* (Paris: Centre Nationale de la Danse, 2000), 47–8.

10 Conversely, the impact of chronophotography and early cinema (e.g., Étienne-Jules Marey and Lumière) on painting (e.g., Picasso, Braque, Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*) and theater (Alfred Jarry) has also been substantiated in recent accounts. See for example Bernice B. Rose, *Picasso, Braque and Early Film in Cubism* (New York: Pace Wildenstein, 2007); David Joselit, *Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp 1910–1941* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); Jill Fell, *Alfred Jarry, an Imagination in Revolt* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005), 70; Maria Tortajada, "The Cinematograph versus Photography, or Cyclists and Time in the Work of Alfred Jarry," in *Cinema Beyond Film: Media Epistemology in the Modern Era*, eds. François Albera and Maria Tortajada (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 97–116.

11 This confusion was exacerbated by the undifferentiating and monolithic manner in which early filmmakers and theorists frequently referred to these earlier arts, and the elision of the massive changes that the established arts had undergone in turn-of-the-century France.

12 See Ricciotto Canudo, "La naissance d'un sixième art: Essai sur le Cinématographe," *Les Entretiens Idéalistes* 10, no. 61 (October 25, 1911): 169–79; reprinted in Ricciotto Canudo, *L'usine aux images*, ed. Jean-Paul Morel (Paris: Séguier, 1995), 32–40, and as "The Birth of a Sixth Art," in *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology 1907–1939*, ed. Richard Abel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 58–66; Abel Gance, "Qu'est-ce que le cinématographe? Un Sixième Art," *Ciné-journal* 185 (March 9, 1912): 10; reprinted in Marcel L'Herbier, ed., *L'intelligence du cinématographe* (Paris: Correa, 1946), 91–2, and as "A Sixth Art," in Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, 66–7. See also Germaine Dulac, "Quelques réflexions sur le cinéma pur," *Le Figaro*, July 2, 1926; and "Les Esthétiques. Les Entraves. La Cinégraphie Intégrale," *L'Art cinématographique* 2 (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1927), 49; reprinted in Dulac, *Écrits sur le cinéma*, 98–105. For a survey of different conceptions of "pure cinema," see additional texts in the volume by Richard Abel cited above.

13 Dulac, in her call for a cinema "free from the other arts," cites literature and theater as contrary to the spirit of cinema, all the while taking great

inspiration from the modern manifestations of these art forms in defining and creating her cinematic ideal. Germaine Dulac, “Le mouvement créateur d’action,” *Cinémagazine*, December 19, 1924; reprinted in Dulac, *Écrits sur le cinéma*, 48.

14 If we closely examine historical discourse on performance arts such as pantomime (and symbolist theater) during this period, moreover, we see that their modernization intersects or interconnects at key moments with that of early cinema and allows for a productive comparative perspective.

15 See Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Roberta E. Pearson. *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Pearson’s work focuses on the critical shift from a nineteenth-century “histrionic” acting style employing dramatic poses to a more modern “verisimilar” style, favoring subtle facial expression and slight changes in posture, found in Griffith’s Biograph films from 1908–13.

16 Film historian Jon Burrows finds evidence of this difference in cultural perceptions of gesture in the US and Britain. See his volume *Legitimate Cinema: Theater Stars in Silent British Films, 1908–1918* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003), 59–60.

17 Mitry calls it “the application of a method, of an art that is sclerotic in its principles: a ritual.” Comparing it to Chaplin and Keaton’s cinema, he states, “There is no link, no point of comparison possible between mime itself and that which they propose.” Jean Mitry, “Histoire sans paroles,” in *Le théâtre du geste: mimes et acteurs*, ed. Jacques Lecoq (Paris: Bordas, 1987), 92.

18 See Brewster and Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema*, 6. Cited in Burrows, *Legitimate Cinema*, 56.

19 Burrows, *Legitimate Cinema*, 56–9.

20 As Guido notes, drawing on the work of André Gaudreault and Rick Altman, before the medium was institutionalized it was characterized not only by a “spontaneous intermediality,” but also by a “negotiated intermediality” (e.g., the dilemma of the “integration” versus the “juxtaposition” of intermedial elements, such as musical comedy

numbers). While this negotiation is essential to any understanding of these intersections, the shared modalities of wordlessness and visualization amongst cinema and these arts need to be addressed. Laurent Guido, "'Quel théâtre groupera jamais tant d'étoiles?' Musique, danse et intégration narrative dans les attractions gestuelles du Film d'Art," *1895* 56 (December 2008): 149, n. 1.

21 See for example Kennan Ferguson's work on silence as political gesture: "Silence: A Politics," *Contemporary Political Theory* 2 (2003): 49–65. Similarly, for poststructuralist philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari, language is inherently limited so all you can do is gesture toward concepts; see also Julia Kristeva's work on obscurantism and circumventing the word. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980), translated as *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004); Julia Kristeva, *Les nouvelles maladies de l'âme* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1993), translated as *New Maladies of the Soul*, trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

22 Gertrud Koch, "On/Off/In: Configurations of the Voice/Body and Apparatus" (lecture, First International Berkeley Conference on Silent Cinema, Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, February 25, 2011).

23 Jonathan Auerbach, *Body Shots: Early Cinema's Incarnations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 7.

24 French film theorist Jacques Aumont has argued that, while the birth of sound greatly disturbed the sovereignty of the image, its silent legacy created a sense of visual primacy that has endured: "The birth of film aesthetics during an epoch when cinema was silent is not without consequences for the most commonly held conceptions concerning film expression. Cinema remains above all an art of the image, while its other elements (dialogue, written words, sound effects and music) must accept its priority." Jacques Aumont, Alain Bergala, Michel Marie, and Marc Vernet, *Aesthetics of Film*, trans. Richard Neupert (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 131.

25 Jane Gaines, "Wordlessness" (lecture, Women and the Silent Screen VI, Cineteca di Bologna, Bologna, June 24, 2010).

26 See Harry Tuttle's blog *Unspoken Cinema* at http://unspokencinema.blogspot.com/. See also the online journal *Unspoken* (currently offline), whose sole issue, on Belá Tarr, was guest edited by Yvette Biró in 2009.

27 See for example Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and Michel Décaudin, *La crise des valeurs symbolistes: vingt ans de poésie française, 1895–1914* (Paris: Collection Universitas, 1960), 29. See also Linda Goddard, "Mallarmé, Picasso and the Aesthetic of the Newspaper," *Word & Image* 22, no. 4 (2006): 293–303; and Linda Goddard's *Aesthetic Rivalries: Word and Image in France, 1880–1926* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011), on how the hierarchy between literature and visual art was both maintained and challenged during this period.

28 Thomas Ferenczi, *L'invention du journalisme en France: naissance de la presse moderne à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Plon, 1993), quoted by Mary Louise Roberts, "Copie subversive: Le journalisme féministe en France à la fin du siècle dernier," *Clio* (1997): 235. See also Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). Perhaps in light of this trend, and the fact that illustrated newspapers were relatively uncommon in France during this period (with few exceptions, such as *L'Illustration* and *L'Excelsior*), journalistic portraits of future filmmaker Germaine Dulac often begin with a vivid account of the subject's physique, gestures, and environment (home or workspace) before going on to describe her activities, talents, and experiences.

29 Fredrick Wedmore, "The Music Halls," *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review* 40 (July–December 1986): 129–30.

30 Michael Denis Biddiss, *The Age of the Masses: Ideas and Society in Europe since 1870* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977), 164.

31 Marcel L'Herbier, "Hermes and Silence," in Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, 147. Originally published as "Hermès et le Silence," *Le Film*, April 29, 1918, 7–12. L'Herbier writes, "Ever since an invention of a miraculous kind, whose importance seems commensurate only with that of printing, undertook the task of seeming to destroy speech … ever since [it] incorporated movement and aimed at a silent, popular, faithful

translation of the daily drama of life or of natural landscapes … the cinema, that subtle machine-which-transmits life, [appears] as a pragmatic source of power promising the most fantastic future" (147). On the heels of World War II, L'Herbier added a footnote tempering this enthusiasm in the reprinted version of his article appearing in *L'intelligence du cinématographe*: "At the time when I wrote this study, one of the most convincing aspects of the grandeur of cinema seemed to be its muteness. After centuries of eloquence from which, despite the desire of poets, we never dared to turn our heads, the reign of cinematic silence assumed the significance of a providential miracle. We glorified it with fervor often to excess! 'The word knows borders. Light is the universal language. The peace of Nations is thirsty for silence.' To think that that screen art could kill a tedious taste for verbal grandeurs or verbosity, there seemed to be only one step" (199).

32 The Auguste Rondel Collection in France's Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF, Richelieu) contains close to one thousand printed brochures (or "livrets imprimés") listed under the heading "Ballet Pantomime" (pre- and post-1850), as well as hundreds more from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See the library catalogues under the headings "Ballet Pantomime" pre-1850 (62–134) and post-1850 (134–95), and "Mimodrames et Pantomimes" (195–245), Auguste Rondel Collection, BNF (Richelieu).

33 Of the three, Farina, who can be situated between the classical school (1890–1900) of mimes Séverin and Thales, and the radical transformation of pantomime under the auspices of the Jacques Copeau theater in 1913, was the least involved in cinema. See Christophe Gauthier, "Maurice Farina, le mime pour mémoire," accessed July 21, 2011, http:www.ihtp.cnrs.fr/ihtpimages/sites/ihtpimages/IMG/pdf/Farina_mime_pour_memoire.pdf.

34 Following her notorious divorce, Colette took a chance role in the one-act pantomime "L'amour, le désir, la chimère" (1906, under the direction of Georgette Leblanc, symbolist theater muse, wife of Maurice Maeterlinck, and future Impressionist film actress), famously supporting her writing career by miming on the music hall stages of Paris, sometimes in scandalous undress. See the short biographical sketch "Colette Willy"

in *L'album comique, dramatique & musical* 8 (October 1908): 17–18, Auguste Rondel Collection, BNF (Richelieu); see also "Invitation à la répétition générale de *La Chair*, mimodrame en 1 acte de MM. G. Wague et L. Lambert, musique de Chantrier" [Invitation to the dress rehearsal of *La Chair*, a one act mime-drama of G. Wague and L. Lambert, music by Chantrier], Auguste Rondel Collection, BNF (Richelieu); and Sidonie Gabrielle Collette, *The Collected Stories of Colette*, ed. Robert Phelps (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1984).

35 Léon Vaisse, *De la pantomime comme langage naturel et moyen d'instruction du sourd-muet. Discours prononcé à la distribution des prix de l'Institution Impériale des Sourds-Muets de Paris, le 12 août 1854* (Paris: Hachette, 1854).

36 The sign of a tree, house, or room, for example, forms the basis for all of the names of the plants or constructions of that genre. Figurative concepts like time are easily added to create a veritable language that "follows the spirit" versus any prescriptive syntactical composition. See Vaisse, *De la pantomime comme langage naturel*, 12–13.

37 Ariane Martinez, "Jeux de mains: Le rôle des mimes dans *L'Empreinte, ou La main rouge* (1908) et *La Main* (1909)," *1895* 56 (December 2008): 133–48.

38 Pearson, *Eloquent Gestures*, 51.

39 René Jeanne, "La Pantomime et le Cinéma," *Cinémagazine* 9 (March 3, 1922): 261–3.

40 Despite the clarity of Séverin's acting what seems to have fallen under criticism was the reliance on slow and exaggerated gestures. This style bears some commonalities with the "histrionic" code, outlined by Roberta Pearson, and which was present in cinema as late as 1912. See Pearson, *Eloquent Gestures*, 26 and 38–43.

41 Georges Wague, "La Pantomime moderne," *Paris-Journal* (November 19, 1910): n.p. See also the author's lecture of the same title: Georges Wague, *La pantomime moderne, conférence prononcé le 19 janvier 1913, dans la salle de l'Université Populaire* (Paris: Éditions de l'Université Populaire, 1913), Auguste Rondel Collection, BNF (Richelieu).

42 Georges Wague, "Les ressources de l'art muet," *Excelsior* (July 9, 1922): n.p. Debureau is credited with importing the *commedia dell'arte*

character Pierrot, performed under the stage name Baptiste at the Théatre des Funambules and made famous in Marcel Carné's 1945 film *Les enfants du paradis* (*Children of Paradise*). See Eugène Rouzier-Dorcières, "La pantomime à notre époque," interview with Georges Wague, *Comoedia* (January 4, 1908): 9.

43 Wague, "Les ressources de l'art muet," n.p.

44 Boris Eichenbaum, quoted by Mitry in "Histoire sans paroles," 92.

45 Rouzier-Dorcières, "La pantomime à notre époque," 11.

46 Wague notes numerous genres and titles belonging to what he considered to be a "golden era" of pantomime, a period during which a variety of works, from Séverin's *L'enfant prodigue* (1890) at the Cercle Funambulesque to the "more vivid" mise en scène of ethnic pantomimes, were represented successfully in various theaters at the same time. (These latter included *Giska la Bohémienne*, *La belle Mexicaine*, and *Le coeur de Floria*, in which Wague starred alongside celebrated Spanish actress and dancer Carolina Otero and the dancers and future film actresses Christine Kerf and Regina Badet.) Wague also notes the "more violent dramas" that were "all the rage" from 1906–14 and which brought widespread recognition to numerous mimes, such as "La belle Otéro" and Colette, to name a couple, and which used a small cast and featured actions that were "simple, rapid and easily understood." Wague, "Les ressources de l'art muet," n.p.

47 Rouzier-Dorcières, "La pantomime à notre époque," 11.

48 Ibid. Wague repeats this question in his 1913 lecture *La pantomime moderne*.

49 Albert Dulac to Georges Wague. Letter, October 27, 1920, Auguste Rondel Collection, BNF (Richelieu). Germaine Dulac to Georges Wague. Card and envelope, September 1937, GD 4267 and GD 4268, Fonds Marie-Anne Colson Malleville, BiFi.

50 Among these were Michel Carré's *L'enfant prodigue* (*The Prodigal Son*, 1907 and 1916); several of Louis Feuillade's films including *Prométhée* (*The Legend of Prometheus*, 1908), *L'aveugle de Jerusalem* (*A Blind Man of Jerusalem*, 1909), *Les Heures* (*The Hours*, 1909), *Le Festin de Balthazar* (*Balthasar's Feast*, 1910, with Stasia Napierkowska) and *La prêtresse de Carthage* (*A Priestess of Carthage*, 1911); Gaston Velles's *Au*

temps des Pharaons (*The Time of the Pharaohs*, 1910, again with Napierkowska); Camille de Morlhon and Ferdinand Zecca's *1812* (1910); De Morlhon's *La Mémoire du coeur* (Memory of the heart, 1911), *Madame Tallien* (1911) and *André Chénier* (1911, the true story of the sensual proto-Romantic French poet killed during the French Revolution); René LePrince's *Le collier de la danseuse* (*The Dancer's Necklace*, 1912); LePrince and Zecca's *Lafièvre de l'or* (The gold rush, 1912, with Napierkowska); Henri Diamant-Berger's *Paris pendant la guerre* (Paris during the war, 1916); Gérard Bourgeois's *Rival de Satan* (*Satan's Rival*, 1911, with Napierkowska), *Christophe Colombe* (1916), *Les mystères du ciel* (Heaven's mysteries, 1920) and *Le fils de la nuit* (*The Son of the Night*, 1921, based on Alexandre Dumas's play of the same title); Jacques de Baroncelli's *Le soupçon tragique* (Tragic suspicion, 1916); Henry Krauss's *Les trois masques* (*The Three Masks*, 1921, based on the pre-war play by Charles Méré); Henry de Golen's *La Tentation* (Temptation, 1921); and Gérard Bourgeois's *Faust* (1922), to name a few. Napierkowska, who had a small role in Henri Burguet's *L'Empreinte ou La main rouge* alongside Mistinguett, Max Dearly, and Séverin, also played in LePrince's *Pierrot aime les roses* (Pierrot loves roses, 1910) and held the role of Pierrot in both LePrince's *Le miracle des fleurs* (*The Miracle of Flowers*, 1912) and Ugo Falena's *Il disinganno di Pierrot* (Pierrot's disappointment, 1915).

51 Tristan Rémy, *Georges Wague, le mime de la Belle Époque* (Paris: Georges Girard, 1964), 134.

52 Wague and Rubinstein would collaborate again in 1920 on the Paris-based production of the Shakespeare opera *Antoine et Cléopatre*. See Rémy, *Georges Wague*, 135–6.

53 See Williams, "Toward the Development of a Modern 'Impressionist' Cinema."

54 In a recent article, Laurent Guido, a specialist of concepts of cinematic rhythm, looks at Dulac's conception within the French theoretical context of the 1920s. Laurent Guido, "Vers une 'symphonie visuelle d'images rythmées': Germaine Dulac et les théories françaises du rythme," in *Germaine Dulac, au-delà des impressions*, ed. Tami Williams (Paris; Bologna: AFRH; Cineteca Bologna, 2006), 107–24.

55 Germaine Albert-Dulac, “Mise en scène” (Introduction by Louis Delluc), *Le Film* 87 (November 12, 1917): 7–9; Germaine Dulac, “Où sont les interprètes?” *Le Film* 133–4 (October 14, 1918): 69–70.

56 Farina, “De la pantomime au Cinéma,” *Le Film* (August 15, 1919): 31–2. Among other works, Farina brought his “chansons mimées” (“mimed songs”) to cinema after the war. See also the series of articles “Pantomimes et mimes par Farina,” *Comoedia*, July 19, 24, and 28, 1920 and August 17, 1920, Auguste Rondel Collection, BNF (Richelieu).

57 This painterly approach can be seen in Viking Eggeling’s *Symphonie diagonale*, 1920–4, and Hans Richter’s pre-1927 films, in which line and form, in order to remain pure, must relinquish all reference to the world. See for example Germaine Dulac, “Ayons la foi,” *Le Film*, October 15, 1919; and “Du sentiment à la ligne,” *Schémas* 1 (February 1927); reprinted in Dulac, *Écrits sur le cinéma*, 21 and 87–9, respectively; and “Du sentiment à la ligne,” BiFi, GD 1381, 3–4.

58 In Dulac’s work, this arabesque takes many different forms, from a relaxed stretching of the arms to a carefully chosen athletic or dance gesture, in films such as *Vénus Victrix* (1917), *Malencontre* (Misadventure, 1920), *La Belle Dame sans Merci* (The beautiful woman without mercy, 1921), *La souriante Madame Beudet* (*The Smiling Madame Beudet*, 1923), and *Arabesques* (1929), to name a few.

59 Germaine Dulac, “L’essence du cinéma – L’idée visuelle,” *Les Cahiers du Mois*, 16–17; reprinted in Dulac, *Écrits sur le cinéma*, 62–7. See also “Visualisation,” *La Rumeur*, November 29, 1927; “Images et rythmes,” *Jeudi*, November 13, 1924; “Le cinéma, art des nuances spirituelles,” *Cinéa-ciné pour tous* (January 1925); “La musique du silence,” *Cinégraphie* (January 1928); reprinted in Dulac, *Écrits sur le cinéma*, 97, 45, 51–2, 106–8, respectively.

60 Wague, “La Pantomime moderne,” n.p. (emphasis in the original).

61 Wague, “Les ressources de l’art muet,” n.p.

62 Ibid.

63 Dulac, “La musique du silence,” 106.

64 Dulac, “Le mouvement créateur d’action,” 49; Rouzier-Dorcières, “La pantomime à notre époque,” 9.

65 Dulac, “Le mouvement créateur d’action,” 48–9.

66 Wague, “La Pantomime moderne,” n.p.

67 Ibid. See for example Dulac, “Du sentiment à la ligne” and “La portée éducative et sociale des actualités,” *Revue Internationale du Cinéma Éducateur* (1934); reprinted in Dulac, *Écrits sur le cinéma*, 203–7. See also her abstract film *Arabesques* (1929), as well as her work as director of newsreels at France-Actualités Gaumont (1930–4) and her newsreel-based documentary *Le cinéma au service de l’histoire*.

68 It is not incongruous that in this same year Dulac directed *La souriante Madame Beudet*, her feminist and Impressionist film based on a play from the “silent theater” of dramatist, sports essayist, and music and film enthusiast André Obey.

Part II

Early Cinema Discourses

7

First Discourses on Film and the Construction of a “Cinematic Episteme”

François Albera

Discourses around the emergence of cinema sketch a hitherto unseen configuration of knowledge. It was not that the new medium seemed to commentators to have come from nowhere; on the contrary, they all outline the relationships that brought it into existence and all follow its genealogy. At the same time, however, the new medium was making new connections between different areas of social life, intellectual life, art, and communication. It truly restructured the field of knowledge by condensing an ensemble of parameters associated with modernity (meaning industrial society) and providing a model for thinking about its logic and effects. We might therefore speak of a *cinematic episteme*, in the sense in which Michel Foucault uses the word,[1] and here I will advance the hypothesis, in an analysis of a broad range of “early discourses” on film, that this episteme was built on a relationship between the mechanical (the device and its mechanical, optical, and chemical workings) and the psychic (the “modern mind” subjected to the upheavals of urban and industrial life; the various scientific reformulations around perception, intellection, and affects). The body of writings I will examine is largely French, the cultural and social context in which the Lumière Cinématographe emerged and where this brand name quickly became a generic term; no doubt sources in other languages would make it possible to add to or modify the approach I adopt here. This approach, however, despite any differences that may exist between it and these other sources, is based on a conviction that

distinguishes it from one of the new historiography's precepts: it is not based on the idea that the new medium was a handmaiden to its predecessors and that it was only "really born" when it acquired artistic status ten years after its emergence within existing cultural series. I believe, on the contrary, that cinema was present from the start. What is needed, though, is to understand it as a medium and not an art form, which is a partial and restrictive perspective.

In 1907 Henry de Graffigny, a popular science journalist, described in an article entitled "The Conquests of Science" the upheavals of the previous century and the astounding transformations of the past few decades. He employs the idea of a family ancestor returned to earth or a traveler who had left for some far-off country around 1870 and has returned to the present-day's "bustling modern cities" to describe what has changed: the extraordinary growth in transportation networks and the diversity of "rival" means of locomotion which all "suppress distance"; the "increasing number of the most extraordinary" conquests of electricity, from industrial uses to therapeutic purposes (the use of high-frequency induction current); the transmission of this energy over great distances; X-rays, radiology, and radioactivity; but also "the rapid means for *transmitting thought*." This turn of phrase, which we find startling in this context because of its para-psychological connotations, refers to the telephone, wireless telegraphy, the kinematograph, the phonograph, etc.[2] A few years later, the same author published a "scientific and travel" novel, in which he brings to life the fiction he used to demonstrate his ideas in the earlier article: two young men leave on a prospecting journey to Asia; one studied physical chemistry and has just finished his military service as a telegraph operator, the other studied business and at the École coloniale.[3] After a shipwreck, they return to Paris with a native of the Caroline Islands, to whom they explain in great detail the marvels of civilization, among them the kinematograph and the phonograph, whose history is given and which are analyzed over some fifteen pages. That same year, in 1912, in a questionnaire published by an American magazine and taken up in France by the weekly *Demain*, readers and a select group of top scholars were asked for their "top ten scientific inventions" of the century. Both groups placed the kinematograph in fourth or fifth place (behind energy sources and their most innovative applications,

such as the electric oven and the steam engine, and behind the automobile and the airplane, but first among communication and reproduction technologies).[4]

Here, then, are three everyday examples of early twentieth-century discourses around the "conquests of modernity" and rapid technological progress, and the kinematograph's place in these phenomena: near the top. It is worth noting that photography did not place in these lists, either because it no longer seemed a "novelty" or because its technological nature had already been effaced and made to seem natural. Or because, after 1896, there was a shift from the paradigm "photography" (established mid-century)[5] to the paradigm "cinema." Nevertheless, the kinematograph was not just a "scientific invention," a "technology." In texts contemporaneous with its emergence, it was also seen from the outset as a medium, an entertainment, whether because it was used to record stage plays and was thereby in a position to supplant them (with modifications owing to the nature of its technology) or because of its connection to entertainments depicting natural phenomena, such as the magic lantern and the panorama, which it improved upon because of the accuracy of its recording and the efficiency of its apparatus (*dispositif*).[6] In the novel mentioned above, an evening watching Gaumont *filmparlants* serves as the pretext to explain to the native visitor the technology of the phenomenon which has just won him over.

It is not improper to speak of the new invention as a medium from the outset, because it quickly found a variety of applications, one of which was even aimed at the "family circle," private life and the amateur. Barely two years after the first public screenings, *Le Gaulois*, in its Easter issue, published on its front page a drawing of an immense egg containing twelve prizes to be raffled off to the paper's subscribers: a portable house, a steam tricycle, a bicycle, a seventeen-volume Larousse dictionary, gardening and gymnastic equipment and, in fifth position, a Cinématographe. "Everyone knows how to do photography; we learn as quickly to handle the cinematograph," the newspaper states. The Lumière Cinématographe was chosen because of its practicality (it recorded, developed, and projected), and from the outset various functions were attributed to it: to record

souvenirs, theater, documents (balls, meetings, a dip in the sea, comedy scenes, monuments). “What cannot be recorded with the Cinématographe?” the journal asks, attributing to it a kind of immediacy – “in the evening, you can show the developed pictures moving as in real life” – and a modular nature: “there are many ways to add to the reality through sound, song or music.”[7]

We also know that, as early as 1898, the Russian-Polish photographer Bolesław Matuszewski foresaw the historiographical dimension of cinema and its ability to document the products of medicine, industry, the military, and the arts.[8] This generalization of a technical instrument, extrapolated in novels by authors such as Jules Verne and Albert Robida (the telephonoscope, home theater, distant wars retransmitted live in the viewer’s living room),[9] opened up a space for cinema as a *medium* with multi-purpose uses, interacting with all other existing means of communication.

The kinematograph, however, was more than that. Simply scanning the most diverse written sources – scientific and technical documents but also medical, legal, literary, philosophical, and other writings – reveals the extent and centrality of references to the kinematograph in all these fields from the late 1890s on. Naturally, part of this interest was in the object itself, as a technological curiosity, a means of representation and entertainment and, in some cases, a promise of art, but in these discourses this object played a quite different role than its proper one, at least as later defined by critical and often academic discourse: it served as a *symptom* of the modernity I have spoken of and as a *model* of this modernity and the effect it had on minds, bodies, behavior, and social structures. Better yet, its role was to mediate between man and machine, the objective world and human subjectivity: it was not merely a new device, a tool, a “prosthesis” (instrument) of sight, but above all a *machine* which recreated and reconfigured psychic operations – thoughts, dreams, memory, etc.[10] De Graffigny’s expression quoted above, a “means for *transmitting thought*,” describes this interface tied to the *mechanical quality* of the kinematograph, always described in detail, and the viewer’s perceptive *mechanism*: the link between the discontinuous photographic recording of images on the film

strip and the recreation of movement based on the persistence of vision (sight); the link between the heterogeneity of animated pictures and inductive logic (causality, narrative); and the way these disjointed elements are connected in the cognitive process (meaning). In other words, because the kinematograph was a part of technological, mechanical and, in short, industrial society (it was a product of this society), because it was synchronous with a contemporary world focused on speed and on ramping up energy levels, on jolts and heterogeneity, it provided a psychic, physiological, and social model of modern man and gave form to the most upsetting reformulations of space and time: going back in time, magnifying the image, speeding it up, ellipses, fragmentation, and vanishings and reappearances.

The correlate of this interconnection, which existed only partially in earlier "media" such as the industrial production of images, the product of the growth in mechanically "contrived" journalism, advertising and entertainment, was the deceptive aspect it could take on, not only in the sense of the "deceptive art" of magic lanterns and phantasmagoria, with their illusionary depictions, but deceptive in its very workings. "What is the Kinetoscope, what is the Cinématographe," Léon Roger-Miles asked, "if not devices in which all the delusions of our sight are applied mathematically to provide our mental perception with a sensation of reality?"[11] Paul Valéry took up this same argument in 1938 in his volume *Degas, danse, dessin* when he spoke of the way in which chronophotography shows "how inventive our eye is, or rather how our perception transforms everything it gives us as a result," imposing "continuities, liaisons, and modes of transformation that we group under the terms *space*, *time*, *matter* and *movement*."[12]

Philosophers thus began to examine the cinema in order to explore those ideas that Kant had defined as "pure *a priori* intuitions." Bergson's views and those of his followers are well known, but we should also mention Maurice Boucher (*Essai sur l'hyperespace: le temps, la matière, l'énergie*, 1903), Ernst Mach (*La connaissance et l'erreur*, 1908), the prolix Félix Le Dantec (*Le déterminisme biologique et la personnalité consciente, esquisse d'une théorie chimique des épiphénomènes naturels*, 1903), and many others. Psychologists mobilized around a phenomenon that redefined how

memory and perception function (our light-sensitive retina produces an image, it does not "reflect" reality). Edward Wheeler Scripture, in his 1897 book *The New Psychology*, devoted a large amount of space to optical toys and Edison's Kinetoscope (he was unfamiliar with both Demenÿ and Lumière), whose workings he detailed in order to examine questions of space and time on the basis of experiments and measurements and not introspective speculation (thereby distancing himself from French thinkers focused on hysteria and hypnosis).[13] A little later, one of the founders of *Gestalttheorie*, Max Wertheimer, used the stroboscopic effect to establish the mechanics of perception.[14] For their part, doctors and physiologists saw in the projection of discontinuous images potentially pathogenic qualities (ocular and mental fatigue, nerve damage, hallucinations) and made reference to them to understand their patients' mental states (hysteria, Ménière's disease, hysterical monocular diplopia, imaginative delirium in generalized paralysis, etc.). Dr. Ernest Monin, who treated ocular hygiene in "our so very hectic modern lives," warned against "cinematophtalmia" and advised people not to "over use" the kinematograph: "retinal fatigue invariably results from the repetition of illuminated images coming one after another on the visual screen twice every forty-fifth of a second, on average, to produce the desired illusion."[15]

The Cinematic Episteme

In the face of this abundance of discourses, knowledge, and practices we might associate with the kinematograph, both before and after its inauguration (along with the Lumière brothers, to whom it owes its name), we might speak, with reference to the latter decades of the nineteenth century, of a "cinematic episteme," one whose outlines were sketched by this vast ensemble of statements and projects of various kinds (both scientific and spectacular). It is not that this new space, mapped out in this way, rose up so suddenly, in a complete break with what preceded it: the kinematograph arrived in *this store of images and signs* Baudelaire spoke of in 1859, which gradually established its framework and generated its categories throughout the century: reproduction, circulation,

standardization, fragmentation, “montage.” But we must look beyond the image, beyond (aural or visual) representation and even its syntax; we must grasp the changes taking place in the mode of production, in the technological apparatus: the *industrial manufacture* of images (posters, prints, newspaper photoengraving); *mechanical* photographic prints; *automatic* music (the phonograph, quickly tied to the microphone and the telephone, which established the bases of the kinematographic machine). In 1844 Jean-Jacques Grandville, in a humorous drawing, spoke of a new “era of great art: unique, mechanical, consolidating [*solidarique*] and pneumatic”[16] which was supplanting hand-painted works of art, themselves expressive of a “temperament”; in 1897 Alfred Jarry described a “painting machine” turning haphazardly in the Iron Gallery of the Palais des Machines;[17] and eighty years later, Michael Snow developed such a “self-thinking” camera for his film *La région centrale* (*The Central Region*, 1971). Here another economy of the imagination emerges: initially images and prints, iconic conveyors of mass, tend to take the place of mental images and memory (think of Stendhal’s *The Life of Henry Brulard*, 1835), and then the Baudelaire-like observer himself becomes a mirror or kaleidoscope, “which, with each one of its movements, represents the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life.”[18]

No one thought the kinematograph had suddenly appeared from nowhere; on the contrary, people constantly attempted to establish its *connections* with the moving images, reproductive and projection devices, toys and apparatuses that existed before it. This didn’t prevent them from realizing its novelty, because it was more than an improvement on its predecessors. It delivered more than Edison or the Lumières, for example, had expected of it. In fact it initiated what Gilbert Simondon calls an *amplification*. Albert Turpain, a physics professor who developed a precursor to wireless telegraphy, expressed this vividly in the first few words of a talk he gave at Limoges in 1918 (“The Kinematograph: The Story of its Invention, its Development, its Future”): “Invented yesterday, flowering suddenly and already strongly built, kinematography recalls those tropical flowers which bloom quickly and, large and colorful, captivate our attention and induce astonishment. There are few fields into which it has not obtruded.”[19]

The kinematograph's efficiency – and the reason for its immediate influence, for the "contagion" it spread throughout every area of social life – was due to the way it coincided with the intellectual and cognitive – but also imaginative – framework of the conditions which made it possible: the conditions of a discursive field and practices pegged to parameters such as precision, automatism, speed, instantaneity, simultaneity, fleetingness, memorization, reproduction, and information. Equipment for changing our sight (binoculars, the telescope, the microscope) and hearing (the telephone and the phonograph); the development of tools to measure human and animal kinetics and physiological movement (the sphygmograph); the emergence of devices for making images move (optical toys); for recording and recreating images (photography) and sound (the gramophone) and for transmission (the telegraph and telephone): all meet and combine in the kinematograph *machine*, which appears to gather them together as if they were scattered members rejoined under its name. This ensemble of technological prostheses of the senses and even of our bodily and psychic functions did not just equip people to better see, feel, or understand: it sketched a new zone of sensibilities and habitus and divided up space in a new way, tracing shared lines and refashioning minds and bodies. The transition from private play (optical toys) to solitary vision (the stereoscope and Kinetoscope) to screenings for large numbers of people (quickly conceived of as countless, as the cinema projects at the 1900 World's Fair in Paris testify) brings to the fore, with new efficiency, an apparatus that apprehends the social body (the public) by means of its individual bodies (the viewers). This is a dimension that other collective practices had taken up and contributed to shape; Balzac, for example, alludes to this in the volume *Le Diable à Paris*, in which Grandville's drawing is found, when he speaks of "the eye of Parisians" consuming fireworks, multicolored glass palaces, phantasmagoria, fairy plays, panoramas, shop windows, exhibitions, wax museums, public displays at the morgue, and thousands of caricatures, vignettes, and lithographs.[20] In the cinema, however, it found an outlet with an entirely different power, due in particular to the unique way the cinema connects the psychic and the masses, private and public, and inner and outer life. To the extent that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the kinematographic "model" took hold in practically every other

field, while industrially produced images encountered increasing levels of dislike and rejection – even as they continued to fascinate (Baudelaire speaks of the "overwhelming nausea brought on by posters" and Flaubert vituperated any notion of illustrating his work).

To understand the cinema, we must begin by examining the technical definitions given to it (as a mechanism) before we immerse ourselves in the images it offers (representation), for the emergence of this cinematic episteme is not so much a part of a "history of the gaze" within a "history of representation" as it is a part of the history of seeing and hearing apparatuses (*dispositifs*), with all that implies for the redefinition of the spectator (viewer or observer) within that history, the place assigned to them and his or her subjection. This concern with the mechanism, far from being limited to the brief period when it was a novelty, as it is imagined to be by historians impatient to address the medium's artistic phase, is, rather, a constant. It underlies and informs the aesthetic theories of cinema from the 1910s right up to the present day and sees cinema as interpreting technological change in the field of transmission and communication, and simulations, and as still the best way to give form to the paradoxes of contemporary physics (space-time, virtual worlds, etc.). But for this to be the case we must acknowledge, in opposition to the idea that "those who first made and thought about cinema" did not see the projected image within the categories of "self-movement," of movement as "immediate given of the image,"[21] but rather as the production of movement through the combination of two mechanisms, that of the device and that of the spectator's perception and brain. Every metaphor around the cinema found in texts written between 1890 and 1918 is based on its discontinuous, even jumpy, mechanics, and on its interface with human physiology and the human psyche. We see similar analogies in Alan Turing's idea of a computer and the mind of a "man in the process of computing" in the 1930s and, today, between neural connections and the digital in virtual images and simulated reality.

Mechanics and the Mechanism

Let’s look at the doublet perception machine/mechanism, which is central to understanding this kinematographic reference. We’ll begin by examining the way in which the machine is introduced, taking up from the outset the *genealogical* nature of this discourse.

Beginning in 1896 no commentator failed to speak *at the same time* of the Kinetoscope and the Cinématographe and none failed to view these two devices – described as “applications” – as the descendants of Joseph Plateau’s experiments, Émile Reynaud’s optical theater, snapshot photography, and chronophotography. Whether popular or scientific, or even spoken by a character in a novel, it was extremely rare for discourse not to follow this path.[22] The official program of March 31, 1902 for the second year of French high school indicates that the Phenakistiscope, the Praxinoscope, and the Cinématographe would be studied together; all were viewed as “devices based on the duration of retinal impression.”[23] Albert Turpain, in his 1918 history of cinema quoted above, begins with Plateau and gives a full account of Georges Demenÿ and Kazimierz Proszynski; other examples of this sort could be given. But this awareness of connections and the consensus it gave rise to should not make us oblivious to what it obscures. I have highlighted these remarks because they are indications of a widespread opinion, of shared knowledge that was even conveyed by educational institutions, but within these genealogical discourses there are obstacles and blind spots, because they derive from a pedagogy of *similarities* and not of *differences*.

For, as I mentioned above, the kinematograph brought a new configuration to the “amplifications” of which Gilbert Simondon spoke with respect to technological invention, amplifications which change things by leaps and bounds. The new object did not limit itself to improving upon its predecessors, which would be to meet preconceived expectations, to remain in the same space as its antecedents. Simondon remarks: “an invention is carried out in response to a problem, but, thanks to an overabundance of efficiency on the part of the object when it is truly invented, the effects of the invention go beyond a solution to the problem.”[24]

Through this process of going beyond, the field around the new machine is reorganized in such a way that its effects were different from those of the magic lantern, chronophotography, and the Praxinoscope, even if all three, and others still, were taken up and extended by the new-born invention.

We must also introduce into this approach the “extrapolations” which, on the basis of earlier machines, projected *possible* uses or improvements and which, in some cases, the kinematograph made reality. But if it is profitable to study the context in which the kinematograph appeared from an archeological perspective, it is because these new uses, these functions and dispositions, were not included in it but emerged in the context in which they *could* be expressed, in the form of the sort of virtual or fictive experimentations found in novelistic and even farcical speculation in the work of authors such as Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, Camille Flammarion, Albert Robida, Didier de Chousy, and Saint-Pol Roux. We must, therefore, distinguish between opinion – the received ideas concerning these technologies – and such futuristic imaginings. This is all the more the case because there is no airtight boundary between scholars, engineers, and writers. Henry de Graffigny went from one side to the other; there are even more striking examples, such as Flammarion, a scholar and novelist, and Charles Cros, an inventor and poet. Robida and de Chousy published their fiction in *La science illustrée* and Louis Figuier alongside scholarly articles.

Now might be the time to mention a second determining aspect of most commentaries on the kinematograph: their comparison of the quality of the images and the quality of the device. In 1896, in *La science illustrée*, Frédéric Dillaye discussed the differences between the Kinetoscope, the Kinetograph, the Cinématoscope, the Cinématographe, and the Chronophotograph, awarding the latter the highest points on the basis of detailed technical analysis (the size of the “primary images” and the effect of their enlargement through projection on both their sharpness and brightness, the mechanism used to stop the image in front of the projector gate, etc.). In these articles, the Kinetoscope was distinguished from the Cinématographe not so much in the way we do today (individual viewers glued to their peephole versus projection in an auditorium for a collective audience) but also with respect to the size of its image and the need to use a magnifying glass; the number of images per second (thirty compared to

fifteen per second in the Cinématographe); the length of the film strip; its degree of precision (the lack of depth according to Turpain);[25] the fact that it operated continuously and that a rotating drum intermittently obscured the images; and the fact that the device served only one purpose (the need to employ a Kinetograph to film and a Kinetoscope to view).[26] These qualities are completely in keeping with Edison's project and suffer from no "ontological" infirmity, except in the *evolutionary* scheme (stages of an invention reaching for its goal) adopted by most commentators (Jacques Deslandes was among the first to point out this defect in the work of the film historians who came before him).[27] Nevertheless, from a commercial perspective the Cinématographe, while it borrowed the principle of perforations perfected by Edison, introduced several innovations and displaced its competitor and predecessor through the use of intermittent movement of the film strip, providing greater brightness; of the Maltese cross, which provided more effective intermittence; of a cam which enabled the image to be held in front of the lantern longer and provide greater brightness; etc. Finally, the device served as both camera and projector, and the negative was developed inside it.[28] In the Easter egg on the cover of *Le Gaulois* in 1897, this was an argument used to guarantee the amateur filmmaker's independence. In short, what won the day for the Lumières was their industrial and marketing strategy, which proved to be superior.[29]

The third aspect touches on the visual effects of the mechanism: the flickering and fluttering image. These projection phenomena are one of the effects of the mechanism, of the physical apparatus. The succession, intermittence, and jerking of images in the machine have the perceptive effects scintillation, quivering, and flicker. In 1897 the Gaumont company marketed a "chronophotographic mesh" with the claim that it eliminated these effects. It was a kind of fan full of little holes that was held in front of one's face and had to be agitated gently to counteract the effect of intermittent light.[30] Several advertisements for equipment boast of having eliminated quivering images and, most often, play on a contagion between the space of the screen and the profilmic. Thus, through a metonymic shift, we see in a poster for the Théâtre du cinématographe Pathé in 1907 a swaggering hunter confronted by a lion with the reassuring slogan: "I don't

quiver at all; I see everything." In 1909 Proszynski improved the movement of the film through the projector to reduce the flicker caused by intermittent light. This awareness of intermittence, which commentators constantly referred to (the 18,828 photographs of *L'assassinat du duc de Guise*, the film's 314-meter length, according to *L'Illustration* in 1908, or the sixteen thousand images which, according to Hugo Münsterberg,[31] make up a film), is a reminder, first of all, of the feat, the "magic," of transforming something immobile into movement. But it takes on more far-reaching meaning, that of the homology cinema/modernity at the root of the medium's triumph and recognition. Think, for example, of Walter Benjamin's hypothesis that Charlie Chaplin's movements conform to the discontinuity of the film in the camera[32] (or Jean Renoir's conviction that he should make Catherine Hessling move and dance in this way in *Charleston*).[33] Louis Feuillade, in one of his final films, *La Gosseline* (The little nipper, 1924), orchestrated a village dance to the "sound" of a jumpy dance tune coming out of a gramophone, performed by cows, horses, chickens, and geese simply by using stop-camera photography, repeated movements, and fast-motion photography.

From animals we end up, however, with the mechanization of man. A song by Briollet and Lelièvre, "La Cinématomagite," with music by Vincent Scotto, thus refers to a film projectionist who has caught "a funny illness/Watching shake and tremble/the flicks I show/I can't help moving with the rhythm/I've always got something to dance to."[34] Like Chaplin in *Modern Times* (1936), he was overtaken by the rhythm of the machine he worked on, in both cases an opportunity to present ambiguous situations which end in sexual excess – amusing versions of Luigi Pirandello's 1915 novel *Si gira*, in which the camera operator becomes a part of the machine to such a point that he does nothing to save the starlet when she is attacked by a lion right in front of him.[35]

This phenomenon, unique to cinema, has wider repercussions that bring us back to the singular place the kinematograph machine occupied in the era's sociocultural imagination. Jean Epstein, in his unfinished memoirs, recounts a childhood memory about his first cinematic experience, in Italy, that is significant in this respect. When "suddenly it was dark, pierced only

by the swarming beam of shadows and light," "trembling specters" were projected on a wall. These phantoms "hopped about to the rhythm of a rude clinking and stung your eyes.… Suddenly the jumpy images spilled beyond the screen and spread to the walls and shook the floor. My chair was shaken by a brief trepidation, enough to induce nausea. There were cries, the sound of chairs being pushed back, tables overturned, broken glass. The projection lamp went out."[36] The fact that the screen sent its jerky movements into the room – thanks to a minor seismic movement – is in keeping with a series of similar motifs found in texts of every description: memoirs, film reviews, advertisements, humor. We might also note that the effects that the young Epstein felt were in no way the result of the picture shown, which was rather harmless despite its ghostly theme, but was instead the product of the machine and its operation, with its jumps, rattling, and jerkiness.

The Modern Mind

In one of his Parisian chronicles of 1897, Jules Claretie – whose initial experience of the kinematograph at the Grand Café the year before had made an impact on him because of its simultaneously faithful and fantastic reality, but also because of its jerkiness[37] – provides an exemplary description of a situation in which the "modern mind" is threatened with jolts not only from the railroad (physical jolts) but also from the discontinuity of "this vibrating *kinematograph* that modern life has become" (a "series of electric currents" in which "characters appear and disappear").[38] Similar remarks about illness and nervous disorders can be found quite frequently in commentaries during the early years of kinematography, during which, in France, the word "cinématographe" itself becomes a metaphor in highly diverse fields: scientific (physics, optics), physiological (perception), medical, legal, criminological, literary, artistic, religious, political (propaganda, information), spiritualist, etc., but with relatively stable and distinctive features deriving from its mechanical nature and its close relationship with perception and memory: images filing past, jumping about and dissolving, shown simultaneously or in juxtaposition; projection, multiplicity, incoherence, fright, etc. These are distinctive

technical features, or features based on technical qualities, which take on an *anthropological* dimension.

This theme can be tied to the earlier and more general theme of electricity as an "environment" of modern life, a diffuse energy spread in all its components as far as the common crowd (which Baudelaire refers to as an "immense reservoir of electricity"). Émile Zola, reviewing the restaging of a drama by Dumas and Gaillardet in 1877, *La tour de Nesle*, speaks of a "purely mechanical art" in which "only movement exists"; he sees in it "an entirely physical spectacle" which grabs the audience "by the nerves and the blood" and "jolts it as if through the discharges of an electrical machine."[39] With the kinematograph, however, this art is settled and energy finds its medium.

It would be impossible to address a list of titles of every novel or essay which, between 1895 and 1925, employed the word *cinématographe*: the *cinématographe* of memory; the retrospective, psychological, inner *cinématographe*; even the marriage, travel, fashion, and high society *cinématographe*. The word is used to qualify, to substantify; it is anthropomorphized; it is used as a term of comparison (*like at the* cinématographe, *like a* cinématographe, people become agitated *in the* cinématographe, *like* in the frame of the cinématographe, *like* the way the scenes, images, and photos of the cinématographe file past, or *on a* cinématographe, *like* the transparency of the cinématographe, etc.).

We thus move from the doublet vision machine/mechanism (the persistence of vision) to the doublet discontinuous and sudden projection-representation/psychic life. The modern mind Claretie spoke of is the center of this relationship. "A memory cinématographe jolted the visions in his mind," François de Nion wrote.[40] Or, as Chateaubriand said in his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, "my memory is a panorama" where "the most diverse lands and heavens with their burning sun or misty horizon are painted on the same canvas."[41] But here the panorama is a metaphor describing only the effect produced – the image – and not the psychic mechanism.

This extension of the kinematograph to the psyche and the body is what motivates the perception in medical circles of cinema as a pathogen, on

both the physiological level – the viewer's risk of ocular lesions, the loss of self-control, trembling or beating of the heart, nervous disorders, etc. – and the psychological. Everything is found there: memory, hallucinations, visions, scenes "without order," changes of scale, sudden disappearances, etc.: "What you call your life is a series of successive momentary lives, like kinematographic images," Le Dantec wrote.[42] Or, in the words of Dr. Paul Trelaün: "Tableaux file past before their eyes, as if they were in front of a kinematograph. The objects that appear in this way to the hallucinating person are sometimes bigger than real life and sometimes smaller; sometimes the objects are still and others move quickly. They vary according to the mental state of the patient."[43]

The kinematograph thus condensed a whole series of social and cultural concerns of the day. In the fears it gave rise to it was the emblem of modernity. To return one last time to Henry de Graffigny, we must note that, in both his journalism and his novel, he brings into dialogue the two opposing "voices" within him: an exalting of the "global" world, the world of instant communication, of the suppression of distances and the shrinking of time, *and* a sense of horror at all that: what does all this progress have to do with happiness, he wonders, with the improvement of life? Not only does technology bring about unfortunate innovations (such as "substitutes for food products, more or less successful imitations of natural products"), but all "these improvements are obtained only at the price of more toil, of harder work, because it is essential to improve the productivity of work to remain at the level society requires."[44]

The kinematograph was the product of this production-oriented industrial society to such an extent that, as Walter Benjamin remarked, its apparatus subjected the film actor to a series of *optical tests*,[45] while viewers found themselves in the role of *experts* who makes the actor pass a test while at the same time being submitted to tests themselves. This widening of the field subjected to tests in the realm of communication and culture is analogous to the widening taking place in the economic sphere (professional aptitude tests, evaluations, requirements and standards for the pace of work) and logically made cinema a component of this social adaptation to the demand for output: it molded viewers to match the

discontinuity of modern life and, very quickly, was used to implement Taylorism. It was employed for surveillance, it was a vector of norms, and, after certain of Jules-Étienne Marey's projects for the military and for industry, it became a part of disciplinary technologies tied to the bio-politics of work.[46] Thus, by 1921, as Jean-Maurice Lahy remarks, the kinematograph had become an "assistant" "in all sorts of professions" involving "analytical observation procedures. The kinematograph is an excellent worker, putting all its energy into the task, fixing the duration of every elementary movement, at the same time as its subject."[47] In 1921 Dr. Edouard Toulouse began to explore the effects of cinema on viewers' bodies (their respiration, heartbeat, motor functions) in order to instruct Charles Pathé in them.[48] In reaction to this functionalism and productivity fetish, it was not unusual for essayists in the press to praise slowness, while the "utopians" preferred to extrapolate the kinematograph's conquests to a state of generalized gigantism. On the technological island Jules Verne envisioned just a few years from the time he was writing, everything is rigged up, measured, quantified, connected.[49] De Villiers too passed from the "loud" posters in the street to his "celestial advertising," followed by Marie-Ernest d'Hervilly, Charles Cros, Camille Flammarion, and Gaston de Pawlowski.[50] Apollinaire too, in the 1910s, imagined the kinematograph transporting the image everywhere at once, creating "clones" or virtual images.[51]

Epistemology and Film History

The crystallization of most of the parameters of "modernity," hitherto dispersed in a great number of objects and practices, within a complex technological apparatus simultaneously turned toward science (experimentation), documentation (recording memory), and entertainment (exhibition and representation) – the kinematograph – gave rise to discourses that drew on previous knowledge and recast them in this melting pot, giving them aesthetic, philosophical, and anthropological qualities. The perceptive apparatus, the physiologic apparatus, and the psychic apparatus –

to mention only those three domains – reformulated their models and tools through their contact with image and sound technologies (we need only think of the progress in what is called “medical imagery” today – often based on the recording of sonic echoes, or echography – to get a sense of the importance of this phenomenon).

This is why the rich body of texts reactivating archaic forms tied to magic, illusionism, magnetism, hypnotism, and waking dreams which have accompanied vision machines and iconic spectacle for centuries (toys, lanterns, shadows, etc.), and which these have sustained in return, corresponds less in the era of the kinematograph to a logic of continuity with previous eras than to a structural reorganization that incorporated them into a new knowledge apparatus. The separation of cinema’s “technological” evolution from its “artistic” dimension (“the cinema becomes an art,” “the kinematograph becomes cinema”) has obscured an entire part of this dimension of the medium. The texts I have discussed above, however, which began to take shape in the late nineteenth century, far from belonging only to a nebulous period of “beginnings,” remained in effect throughout the twentieth century and continue to define the cinema from within what has been called its “episteme.” The homology of mind and machine, for example, has been a constant, running through the work of Wertheimer and Münsterberg, the Institut de filmologie and Gilles Deleuze, right up to present-day research into “neurocinematics.”[52] Technological questions, meanwhile, whose consequences or anthropological framework unavoidably arise, have remained present at all times (today in the form of discussions around synthetic images, interactivity, virtual images, etc.). Rémy de Gourmont’s question of 1907 is constantly being reposed: “You know the kinematograph but you don’t know the other side of the kinematograph. The images it shows are reconstituted images. Have you ever seen the fragmentary images with which its complete image is obtained?”[53] The cinema was either “projected” into a coming technological future – thus Charles Le Fraper’s first words in his *Manuel pratique à l’usage des Directeurs de cinéma, des opérateurs et toutes les personnes qui s’intéressent à la Cinématographie de cinéma* in 1913 concerned the stereoscopic cinema being promoted by advertisements at the back of his book (the “Plastikon,” “living images projected without a

screen," in which the actors are in space as if present in flesh and blood); and thus Léon Moussinac's peering into the future in 1926 on the topic of cinema's miniaturization and changes to its base medium.[54] Commentators regularly write about, approve of, or call for one great technological subject or another that has been raised and commented on regularly since 1896, such as synchronized sound, color, or later wide-screen projections, etc.

Albert Turpain, in his lecture mentioned above, took up every possible trick effect in cinema to explain the consequences of these on our conception of time, causality, and even "the beyond": "Project a series of film strips in reverse. The kinematograph is one of the most curious machines for exploring time, which the famous American [*sic*] novelist Wells imagined without being able to picture the details that a mere kinematograph projected backwards reveals."[55] These epistemic reflections continue, in anecdotal or more ambitious form, throughout the 1920s within the film milieu itself: Marcel L'Herbier, for example, in his texts "Hermès et le silence" (1918), "Le Cinématographe devant les Beaux-Arts" (1921), "Le Cinématographe contre l'art" (1923), and "Cinématographe et démocratie" (1925), contrasts art, "which is an end unto itself," and "the kinematograph, [which] is a pragmatic force."[56] Or Abel Gance, in *Prisme* (1908–30), makes the connection between cinema and relativity and the theory of evolution.[57] Jean Epstein, finally, from 1921 until his late writings – *L'intelligence d'une machine* (1946), *Le cinéma du diable* (1947), and *Esprit du cinéma* (1955) – called space-time relations into question using cinema for his arguments.[58] If we were to look at the broader fields of communication, archives, or pedagogy, we would find a number of texts of various kinds acknowledging or making the claim for an encyclopedic and experimental function for cinema (between 1910 and 1920, such texts were written by the familiar authors Bołeslaw Matuszewski, François Davis, Dr. Edouard Toulouse, G.-Michel Coissac, Jean-Benoît Lévy, and Jean-Painlevé, but there were many others, right up until the final years of the twentieth century, when cinema was shown on television, and today on the web, without there having necessarily been a change in paradigm or episteme).

In the body of writings which accompanied the kinematograph's growth, we should distinguish, therefore, the dominant themes – such as technology, the law, or aesthetics – knowing that these themes are often implicitly interconnected and carry within them indirect definitions of the medium and its uses (the legal, for example, defines the aesthetic, while the technological circumscribes the philosophical). The intermedial heterogeneity of kinematograph screenings invites a variety of discourses (theater, pantomime, illusionism, shadow plays, tableaux vivants, etc.), while claims of autonomy and specificity made by various categories of agents within the field of entertainment (legitimacy) open up a discursive space centered on the promotion of the medium (the programmatic and prescriptive discourse of the world of production and marketing), on its "expert" or "learned" variants (art, language), and on its evaluation (critical discourse) and the capitalization of its itinerary (historical discourse).

Going beyond the internal approach to the artistic history of the film medium does not mean neglecting this approach or avoiding the question of aesthetics. On the contrary, it sees these from a broader perspective than that of "art theory" alone. For, as I believe I have demonstrated, cinema when it emerged was not only defined or determined by the context of "modernity" that industrial society carried in its womb: it expressed this context, it formulated it and played the social role of incorporating its values (productivity, mobility, fluidity, connections). It is not my purpose here either to deplore or to celebrate this. Theorists – filmmaker-theorists – who have examined this reality have either assented to it, which may be deemed guileless (adherence), or tried to get around it, which we might describe as illusory. In any event, we see the premises of this coalescence of cinema and the disciplinary methods of advanced capitalist society being turned inside out less in today's self-proclaimed "postmodernity," for which we still lack a clear definition, than in "off-center" practices. This overturning could only grow with the industrialization of the medium and its logic of pertaining, today, to new technologies: slowness or slowing down, the refusal of an anthropocentric point of view, deconstruction of narrative and dramaturgical canons, etc. (in the manner, among other contemporary filmmakers, of Jean-Marie Straub, Michael Snow, and Alexander Sokurov). While the medical and psychophilosophical

discourses of the early years demonstrate a kind of simultaneous "wiring up" of the projection machine to the viewers' nerves or "mental thread," by 1914 other discourses were already remarking that "the kinematograph's influence is neither immediate nor precise":[59] "it affects our thoughts only with time. Those peaceful bourgeois, those working-class families, those students and young millinery girls who follow carefully the movements of fleeting silhouettes are, without being aware of it, exercising latent forces within them."[60]

For Marcel Héraud, "the perpetual motion which at first surprises them [the viewers] and then annoys them soon develops in them the ability to understand and to act. Everything about the initial sensations they feel is physical. They see gestures and then foresee others through the unconscious association of images. Gradually they become used to controlling their emotions in order not to miss any of the action. They learn what they must do without worrying about finding what to say."[61]

In the end, for Héraud, the kinematograph brings about the mastery of those "essential virtues, energy and activity": "it transforms the pile of confused thoughts into vital strength. It prepares the ground for accomplishments. More powerful than a moralist, it establishes in the public mind 'a philosophy of the instincts.'… But who knows if the academician, in propagating this doctrine, doesn't owe the better part of his work to the lessons of the educational film?… Perhaps, after all, Mr. Bergson is nothing more than a film buff?"[62]

Notes

1 See Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 2002 [1969]). I introduced this hypothesis with Maria Tortajada in "The 1900 Episteme," in *Cinema Beyond Film: Media Epistemology in the Modern Era*, eds. François Albera and Maria Tortajada (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

2 Henry de Graffigny, "Causerie scientifique," *Ma revue hebdomadaire illustrée* 15 (June 9, 1907): 5–6.

3 Henry de Graffigny, *Un sauvage à Paris. Roman scientifique et de voyages* (Paris: Mame, 1912), http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54892279.

4 *Demain* 5, no. 40 (December 10, 1912): 310–11.

5 On this topic see François Brunet, *La naissance de l'idée de photographie* (Paris: PUF, 2000).

6 See early descriptions by Jules Claretie in "Photographies animées," in *La vie à Paris, 1896* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1897), 58–60, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k75881n; and "Les indiscrétions du cinématographe," in *La vie à Paris, 1897* (Paris: Charpentier et Fasquelle, 1898), 420–2, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k758820; and by Rémy de Gourmont in *Le Mercure de France*, September 1, 1907.

7 *Le Gaulois* (April 17, 1897): 1.

8 Bolesław Matuszewski, *Une nouvelle source de l'Histoire (Création d'un Dépôt de cinématographie historique)* (Paris: Imprimerie Noizette, 1898); and *La photographie animée: ce qu'elle est, ce qu'elle doit être* (Paris: Imprimerie Noizette, 1898). An annotated modern-day edition of these writings exists: *Écrits cinématographiques. Une nouvelle source de l'histoire, la photographie animée*, ed. Magdalena Mazaraki (Paris: AFRHC, 2006).

9 See in particular Jules Verne, *L'île à hélice* (Paris: Hetzel, 1895) and Albert Robida, *Le vingtième siècle* (Paris: Georges Decaux, 1883). Verne's novel has been published in countless English editions under the titles *The Floating Island* and *Propeller Island*, often heavily censored by the English-language publishers. Robida's novel has been published in an English translation by Philippe Willems under the title *The Twentieth Century* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

10 See André Leroi-Gourhan on the relationship between the tool and the motive gesture and on the exteriorization of the motive brain in *Gesture and Speech*, trans. Anna Bostock Berger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993 [1965]), esp. chap. 7 and chap. 8.

11 Léon Roger-Miles, *La revue des arts décoratifs* 16 (1896): 395.

12 Paul Valéry, *Degas, danse, dessin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), 61. This passage does not appear in the English edition of this volume (*Degas, Dance, Drawing*, trans. Helen Burlin [New York: Lear, 1948]).

13 Edward Wheeler Scripture, *The New Psychology* (London: W. Scott, 1897).

14 Max Wertheimer, “Experimentelle Studien über das Sehen von Bewegung,” *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* 61 (1912).

15 Dr. Ernest Monin, *Pour le beau sexe. Conseil d’un vieux spécialiste* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1914) (chap. “L’hygiène des yeux” [25e causerie]), 244.

16 Jean-Jacques Grandville, “Galerie des Beaux-Arts,” in *Le Diable à Paris. Paris et les Parisiens à la plume et au crayon*, Paul Gavarni, Jean-Jacques Grandville, *et al*. (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1868), n.p. (plate 24), http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k102688c.

17 Alfred Jarry, “Gestes et opinions du Docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien. Roman néo-scientifique,” in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Michel Arrivé (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 714.

18 Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863), in “*The Painter of Modern Life” and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Da Capo, 1986), 9.

19 Albert Turpain, “Le Cinématographe. Histoire de son invention, son développement, son avenir,” in *Association française pour l’avancement des sciences. Conférences faites en 1918* (Paris: 1918), 163–81.

20 Honoré de Balzac, “Un Gaudissart de la rue Richelieu,” in Théophile Lavallée, *et al*., *Le Diable à Paris et les Parisiens* (Paris: Hetzel, 1845), 289, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5578064j. On this topic see Max Milner, *La fantasmagorie: essai sur l’optique fantastique* (Paris: PUF, 1982); Ann Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Vanessa R. Schwartz and Leo Charney, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Patrick Désile, *Généalogie de la lumière. Du panorama au cinéma* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2000); and Philippe Hamon, *Imageries. Littérature et image au XIXe siècle* (Paris: José Corti, 2001).

21 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Continuum, 2005 [1985]), 151.

22 See for example Georges Brunel, “Le Kinétoscope et le Cinématographe,” in *La joie de la maison. Journal hebdomadaire illustré*

271 (March 12, 1896), http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb327965116/date.

23 Quoted in Fernand Dommer, *Physique (optique et électricité)* (Paris: André Guédon, 1906), 174–6, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5701429v.

24 Gilbert Simondon, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* (Paris: Aubier, 2001 [1958]), 170–1.

25 "Kinetoscope scenes lack depth, each photoproof exposed for too short a time." Turpain, "Cinématographe," 169.

26 See the series of articles by F. Dillaye under the title "Le mouvement photographique" in *La science illustrée*, in particular: "Le cinétophonographe d'Edison," 15, no. 366 (1894): 3; "Cinématographe et Cinématoscope," 17, no. 444 (1896): 354; "Le Chronophotographe de Demenÿ," 18, no. 465 (1896): 330. In the same journal, see also L. Beauval's article "Le cinétographe d'Edison," 8, no. 200 (1891): 276.

27 See Jacques Deslandes, *Histoire comparée du cinéma*, vol. 1 (Tournai: Casterman, 1966).

28 "The device they [Mr. A. and L. Lumière] invented, the said *Cinématographe* … being reversible, thus constitutes a *Cinématoscope*. As the device remains similar in both cases, that is to say as a receiving and reproducing device, we only keep the name *Cinématographe* so as not to confuse the issue." (Dillaye, "Cinématographe et Cinématoscope," 355.)

29 On this topic see Guy Fihman, "La stratégie Lumière: l'invention du cinéma comme marché," 35–46, and Jean-Jacques Meusy and André Straus, "L'argent du cinématographe Lumière," 47–62, in *Une histoire économique du cinéma français (1895–1995)*, eds. Pierre-Jean Benghozi and Christian Delage (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997).

30 As described in an advertisement in *La Nature* 1253 (June 5, 1897).

31 Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*, 1916, reprinted as *The Film: A Psychological Study*. *The Silent Photoplay in 1916* (New York: Dover, 1970), 82.

32 Benjamin remarks in a fragment written in 1935 and unpublished in his lifetime: "Each single movement [Chaplin] makes is composed of a succession of staccato bits of movement … always the same jerky sequence of tiny movements applies the law of the cinematic image

sequence to human motorial [*sic*] functions"; "the human being is integrated [*einmontiert*] into the film image by way of his gestures." Walter Benjamin, "The Formula in Which the Dialectical Structure of Film Finds Expression," trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 3, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 94.

33 See the interview with Jean Renoir in *Cinéa-Ciné pour tous* 59 (April 15, 1926): 14–15 and his comments in *Ma vie et mes films*: "I got it into my head … that since cinema hinges on the jerky movements of the Maltese cross, actors should act in a jerky manner also" (Paris: Flammarion, 1974), 46.

34 Words by Briollet and Léo Lelièvre, music by Vincent Scotto, published in *Paris qui chante* no. 257 (December 22, 1907), quoted by Jean-Jacques Meusy, *Paris – palaces ou le temps des cinémas 1894–1918* (Paris: CNRS-AFRHC, 1995), 134.

35 Luigi Pirandello, *Shoot! The Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff (London: Chatto, 1927).

36 Jean Epstein, "Mémoires inachevées," in *Écrits sur le cinéma*, vol. 1 (Paris: Seghers, 1974), 27–8.

37 Claretie, "Photographies animées".

38 Jules Claretie, "Trop d'émotions! – Le cerveau moderne," in *La vie à Paris, 1897* (Paris: Charpentier et Fasquelle, 1898), 416–17, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k758820. Emphasis in the original.

39 Émile Zola, "Le naturalisme au théâtre," in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 10, *La critique naturaliste (1881–1882)* (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2004), 194.

40 François de Nion, *Les façades. Roman d'aventures mondaines*, 6th ed. (Paris: La Revue Blanche, 1898), 182, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5446174k.

41 "From Dunkeim to Frankenstein, the road threads its way through a valley so narrow that it barely allows access for a vehicle; the trees descending from the opposite embankments meet and embrace in the ravine. Between Messenia and Arcadia, I followed similar valleys, to the better track nearby: Pan knew nothing of bridges and highways. Flowering broom and a jay brought back memories of Brittany; I remember the pleasure I derived from that bird's cry in the mountains of Judea. My

memory is a panorama; there, on the same screen the most diverse sites and skies come to paint themselves with their burning suns or their misted horizons. (François-René de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, book 38, chap. 9, section 1, trans. A. S. Kline, http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Chateaubriand/Chathome.htm.

42 Félix Le Dantec, *Le conflit. Entretiens philosophiques* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1901), 166, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5475877r.

43 Dr. Paul Trelaün, *Des paranoïas avec hallucinations* (Toulouse: Saint-Cyprien, 1905), 41, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5545601b.

44 de Graffigny, "Causerie scientifique," 6.

45 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility," trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn, in Eiland and Jennings, *Selected Writings*, 111–12.

46 On this point, see the authoritative volume by Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernism* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

47 Jean-Maurice Lahy, *Le système Taylor et la physiologie du travail professionnel* (Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1921), 52.

48 See Dr. Toulouse's writings on the cinema, edited by Jean-Paul Morel, in *1895* 60 (2010).

49 Verne, *Floating Island* (see note 9).

50 See Villiers de L'Isle Adam, "La découverte de M. Grave," *La Renaissance littéraire et artistique* (November 30, 1873) (later published under the title "Affichage céleste" and available online in an English translation by Hamish Miles entitled "Heavenly Advertising" at http://gaslight.mtroyal.ca/villier2.htm); Félicien Champsaur, *Dinah Samuel. Édition définitive* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1889), http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k379525w; Marie-Ernest d'Hervilly, "Josuah Electricmann," in *Timbale d'histoires à la parisienne* (Paris: Marpon-Flammarion, 1883); Robida, *Vingtième siècle*; Jules Verne, "La journée d'un journaliste américain en 2890," *Le Journal d'Amiens* (January 21, 1891); and Gaston de Pawlowski, *Inventions nouvelles et dernières nouveautés* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1916), http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5452333c.

51 Guillaume Apollinaire, “The False Messiah, Amphion, or The Stories and Adventures of the Baron of Ormesan,” in *Heresiarch & Co*. (New York: Exact Change, 2009 [1911]), and “The Moon King,” trans. Ron Padgett, in *The Poet Assassinated and Other Stories* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984 [1916]).

52 See Uri Hasson, Ohad Landesman, Barbara Knappmeyer, Ignacio Vallines, Nava Rubin, and David J. Heeger, “Neurocinematics: The Neuroscience of Film,” *Projections* 2, no. 1 (2008): 1–26. This article describes a new method for assessing the effects of a given film on viewers’ brain activity measured using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) during free viewing of films. It proposes that ISC may be useful to film studies by providing a quantitative neuroscientific assessment of the impact of different styles of filmmaking on viewers’ brains, and a valuable method for the film industry to better assess its products, bring together cognitive neuroscience and film studies, and open the way for a new interdisciplinary field of “neurocinematic” studies.

53 Rémy de Gourmont, “Les Figures,” in *Nouveaux dialogues des amateurs sur les choses du temps, 1907–1910* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1911), 40.

54 Léon Moussinac, “Anticipations nécessaires,” *L’Humanité*, June 18, 1926.

55 Turpain, “Cinématographe,” 173.

56 Marcel L’Herbier, “Hermes and Silence,” in *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology 1907–1939*, ed. Richard Abel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 147, originally published as “Hermès et le Silence,” *Le Film*, nos. 110–11 (April 29, 1918): 7–12. See also Marcel L’Herbier; “Le Cinématographe devant les Beaux-Arts,” *Comœdia*, December 4, 1921; “Le cinématographe contre l’art,” *Cinéa*, no. 95 (July 1, 1923): 17; “Cinématographe et démocratie,” *Paris Soir*, October 25, 1925.

57 Abel Gance, *Prisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1930). The book, which includes a preface by Elie Faure, brings together texts written during two decades, some dating back to 1908.

58 Jean Epstein, *L’intelligence d’une machine* (Paris: Jacques Melot, 1946); *Le cinéma du diable* (Paris: Jacques Melot, 1947); *Esprit du*

cinéma (Geneva: Jeheber, 1955). The theme of the analyses Epstein develops across his works, and from article to article, is that of cinema "as an anti-universe visible on screen" capable of "surpassing the most absurd extrapolations of Einsteinian relativity" ("Finalité du cinéma," *Mercure de France*, February 1, 1949, reprinted in *Écrits sur le cinéma*, vol. 2 [Paris: Seghers, 1974], 42).

59 Marcel Héraud, "Paradoxe sur le cinématographe," *La revue judiciaire* (April 25, 1914): 105, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb345097090/date.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

8

The Discourses of Art in Early Film, or, Why Not Rancière?

Rob King

The Representative Regime: Quality Films and Historicism

The story of film's ascendancy as a new art form has traditionally been framed in terms of medium specificity. According to this familiar account, the earliest attempts to win for film the mantle of art involved misguided efforts to emulate more established art forms, resulting in an international boom of "quality films" based on prestigious literary, theatrical, and historical sources. The inaugural moment here is typically given as the launching in France of the Film d'Art company in February 1908 and the international acclaim accorded to its debut release, *L'assassinat du duc de Guise* (*The Assassination of the Duke of Guise*), written by Henri Levedan of the Académie française and recounting a famous incident from the reign of Henri III. In this context, supporters called for film's recognition as an art by linking cinema to the conventions of *other* arts, spurring the production of many similar quality productions in France, Italy, and the United States during the transitional period of 1908 to 1915. Yet the future, it is said, led elsewhere; not in the emulation of the larger-than-life gestures and painted flats of theatrical performance, but in the discovery of cinema's autonomy. The quality films may "represent the first conscious attempt at transplanting the movies from the folk art level to that of 'real art'," wrote Erwin Panofsky in a celebrated 1934 essay, "but they also bear witness to the fact

that this commendable goal could not be reached in so simple a manner."[1] Cinema became truly an art only with the discovery of the techniques and properties specific to its technology, whether through the development of editing (the close-up, cross-cutting; i.e., the path leading, through directors like D. W. Griffith, to the emergence of classical film form) or through the medium's photographic capacity to capture the abstract play of form and movement (the path leading, through the critical writings of Abel Gance, Ricciotto Canudo, and others, to the emergence of the early avant-garde).

One immediate way to complicate this account would be to put into question the undifferentiated notion of art upon which it rests. It will not do, for instance, to imagine that early producers had operated in some kind of vacuum of artistic influence prior to the quality films. One should not forget that filmmakers had from the beginning routinely found inspiration in diverse cultural sources: popular stage productions, vaudeville skits, political cartoons, comic strips, magic lantern shows – all of these provided reference points for what has been called the "promiscuous intertextuality" of early cinema.[2] What changes around 1908 was thus more a transformation in the *type* of sources upon which filmmakers drew, as they now strove to appropriate the pedigree of the reputable arts, the legitimate theater and literature in particular. Yet even here distinctions must be drawn, since prestige was to be won not by emulating theater or literature of any stripe, but rather particular traditions within those practices. It was not the novels of a William Dean Howells or Henry James that companies such as Vitagraph sought as the basis for their adaptations but rather the work of Shakespeare and Dickens. Nor was it, say, the stagecraft of Henrik Ibsen that shaped the style of early quality films but rather, as Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs have shown, the conventions of nineteenth-century stage pictorialism, itself derived from history painting.[3] Also relevant here is the referencing of well-known paintings in many quality pictures – for instance, Vitagraph's *Julius Caesar* (1908), which patterns one scene after Jean-Léon Gérôme's *La mort de César* (1867) or the Italian company Cines' nine-reel *Quo Vadis?* (1913), which similarly quotes a historical painting by Gérôme, *Pollice Verso* (1872). Commonly interpreted as an attempt to align cinema with the established canons of art, such quotations appear more perplexing when it is recalled that the historicist style associated with Gérôme had, by

the early twentieth century, already fallen out of favor within the academy. It is remarkable, then, that at the moment when history painting was no longer revered as the *grand genre*, the new medium nevertheless sought legitimacy from this source.[4]

The question then becomes: how are we to make sense of the selectivity at work here? And how, in particular, can we explain the peculiar lag that prioritized what were, in some respects, already outmoded genres as the royal road to cinematic art? One ready explanation would refer to the idea of a "selective tradition," that is, to those artworks already canonized and circulated within institutions of cultural reproduction.[5] Early filmmakers allied themselves with those texts and genres which, while not necessarily in vogue, were nonetheless sufficiently well known so as to brook no dissent concerning their status as art. From this perspective, the fact that historicist painters such as Alma-Tadema and Gérôme were no longer favored in the Paris salons counted for less than the fact that their works were familiar from their reproduction in prints and illustrations (even appearing in schoolbooks and medicine advertisements during this period).[6] Likewise Shakespeare: the overwhelming priority given to the Bard's plays as material for adaptation – with at least thirty-six one-reel Shakespeare films produced in the United States alone between 1908 and 1913 – testifies in a straightforward way to his established centrality within the consensus-building efforts of cultural institutions.[7] In effect, what the quality films were engaged in was less a strategy of "highbrow" cultural distinction than a "middlebrow" dissemination of respectable culture; the goal was less that of appealing to the exclusivity of refined audiences than a broad circulation of approved texts and genres across diverse-taste publics.[8]

Another way of coming at these issues, one that the present essay will develop, has to do with what French philosopher Jacques Rancière has discussed as the "regimes" of art – a historicizing concept that examines the relations binding distinct notions of artistic practice to forms of political and social ordering. A brief elaboration of these concepts will be especially useful here since the forms of artistic practice that the quality films sought to emulate all fall within the category of what Rancière calls the "representative" regime. Codified in the Classical Age, the representative

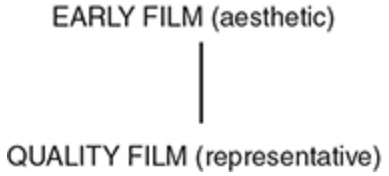
regime imposed, in Rancière's words, a "system of relations between the sayable and the visible," between what could and could not be represented, thereby establishing hierarchies of genres and forms according to subject matter.[9] Art, under this conception, was to have an essentially mimetic function as an imitation of an action: it was shaped by normative principles that determined which subjects merited artistic representation, established classifications between genres according to those subjects, and determined manners of expression suited to each. "The representative primacy of action over characters or of narration over description, [and] the hierarchy of genres according to the dignity of their subject matter" – these elements define the representative regime as a practice of art corresponding to a rigidly structured social order and a fully hierarchical vision of community.[10] It is, moreover, precisely these terms that are upset in the modern era with the advent of what Rancière terms the "aesthetic" regime, a rethinking of art premised on the idea of a democratic equality of representable subjects, in which is abolished not only the hierarchy of artistic forms but even, ultimately, the distinction between form and subject matter. The aesthetic regime "frees [art] from any specific rule, from any hierarchy of the arts, subject matter, and genres.… The aesthetic state is a pure instance of suspension, a moment when form is experienced for itself."[11]

It should be clear that the terms "representative" and "aesthetic" are here to be understood not in their everyday or common-or-garden usage. Representative, for instance, does not mean "representational," in the sense of a figurative art to be contrasted with, say, modernist abstraction; instead, the term refers to a principle of selection governing the artistic modes appropriate to different subjects (e.g., "high" tragedy vs. "low" comedy and the typologies of social characters related to each). Nor, furthermore, does aesthetic mean anything as general as "artistic," but derives more directly from the Greek *aisthesis*, meaning perception through the senses; specifically, in this case, a modality of artistic perception that establishes new parameters for what can be seen and what can be said, freed from the exclusionary barriers on which the representative regime was founded. The hierarchy of genres is thus dismantled by the assertion of the equality of subjects, the scandalous fact that all things and all people can comprise the

subject of an artwork. Framed thus, it is clear that the aesthetic regime includes the orbit of the modernist avant-garde – it includes, say, the decodification that permitted painting's discovery of its own medium, the two-dimensional surface of the canvas and the sensory materiality of brush strokes – but is in no way to be identified with the modernist revolution *per se*. Rancière himself dates the beginnings of the aesthetic regime significantly earlier, locating it chiefly within the innovations of mid-nineteenth-century realism associated with Flaubert and Balzac (although he also finds harbingers in seventeenth-century Dutch still-life paintings). To cite one of the philosopher's most frequent examples, the aesthetic regime is thus already present in the mute significance of Charles Bovary's hat, "whose ugliness possesses a profundity of silent expression," long before Malevich painted a white square on a white canvas in *White on White* (1918).[12]

It is furthermore evident that film, too, provided a powerful symptom of this transition. The earliest expressions of cinematic fascination spoke directly to the leveling process associated with the aesthetic state: one thinks of early commentators who celebrated the breeze rustling the leaves in the trees in the first Lumière films, the pounding of the surf in Birt Acres' *Rough Sea at Dover* (1895), or the changing landscapes shown in hundreds of phantom rides. Along similar lines, in 1896, an English writer compared film with what he called the "realism" of the pre-Raphaelite painters, noting that "both the cinematograph and the pre-Raphaelite suffer from the same vice … [both] are *incapable of selection*; they grasp at every straw that comes in their way; they see the trivial and important, the near and the distant, with the same fecklessly impartial eye."[13] "Feckless impartiality," in this sense, meant cinema's mechanical incapacity to predetermine or limit the significance of its images – the way in which the subject of any photographic image is invariably cut across and overwhelmed by the immediacy of contingent details[14] – but it might also have described the overwhelming appeal of early actuality films and scenics that constituted, until around 1906, the dominant film genre in the then-industrialized world.

What Rancière's model enables us to see, in this context, is how the ideation of art in early quality films implied the negation of precisely these aesthetic properties, promoting in their place literary and theatrical adaptations limited to the older orbit of the representative genres. It is as though the passage from the earliest actualities to the vogue of the quality film thus embodied thesis and antithesis in a Hegelian sense, whereby the scandal of early cinema's dehierarchized and democratizing vision was eventually to be subordinated to historical pomp and circumstance, to the fully hierarchical spectacle of history's heroes and kings:



But Rancière also allows us to chart a direct path from questions of artistic form to questions of politics: as hinted at above, Rancière's conception of artistic regimes – as particular "distributions of the sensible," of the visible and the sayable, etc. – is intimately tied to the sphere of politics, which similarly revolves around the distribution of "what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak."[15] Art for Rancière is inherently political, not in the sense that it always offers political messages, but, prior to this, by providing articulations of sensory experience that open onto forms of social perception and categorization. The logic of artistic hierarchy, as reflected in the classical ordering of genres according to subject matter, thus corresponds to a hierarchization of political occupations and social strata within specific formations, while the aesthetic regime can be contrastingly aligned with the presupposition of political equality. An analogy between the quality films and the *grand genre* of historical painting thus suggests itself: cinematic reproduction could only be countenanced as art once it was linked to the privilege accorded the past (whether biblical, literary, or historical) as a space for the manifestation of heroic actions and characters – as though the very notion of art was of necessity tied to, and could not be imagined outside of, the pageantry of nobility. The question that then arises is how these political entailments were variously articulated in the diverse national contexts of early cinema, to which the next section turns.

The Modes of Art: National Heritage and Reform in the Quality Film

Two separate principles – in practice often indistinguishable – orchestrate the ideological operations of the quality film during this period: on the one hand, the formation of what might be termed, with Gramsci, a "national-popular" collective will; on the other, the question of moral reform.[16] The first opens onto the various ways in which artistic achievement could be linked to projects of national revival; the second suggests how ideas of art could be used to impose hegemonic order within situations of social discord and class difference. In what follows, this dichotomy will be used to sketch the circulation of those ideas in distinct national contexts: the Italian, American, and, more briefly, French industries, circa the late 1900s/early 1910s.

1 Art and the national-popular (Italy)

The country for which conceptions of film art were most durably linked to the project of nation-building was undoubtedly Italy. The establishment of a national film industry had begun in 1905 and, almost from the beginning, was characterized by extensive economic and artistic ties linking cinema to existing institutions of political and cultural authority. Uniquely among film-producing nations, the involvement of the aristocracy in Italian cinema lent fuel to the development of a nationalist visual poetics, while the participation of many prestigious Italian *letterati* in the industry similarly ensured film's swift appreciation as an intellectual and artistic phenomenon.

What motivated these alliances, in part, was a financial crisis around 1908–9, caused by the film industry's fast expansion and overproduction. Against a background of economic uncertainty, struggling film producers happily nestled in the pocketbooks of local leaders and, in the process, laid the groundwork for a developing system of elite patronage. In Turin, for instance, Camillo Ottolenghi's Aquila saved itself by getting a loan from a

new financier, the lawyer Lino Pugliese, who assumed practical management of the company. In Naples, the Troncone brothers stayed afloat after acquiring financial capital from Catholic organizations, in return for which they agreed to produce films on "biblical and mystical themes."[17] Similarly, in late 1909, the financial struggles of the Milanese firm SAFFI-Camerio resulted in its restructuring under the new management of Count Pier Gaetano Venino, who endowed the company – newly christened Milano Films – with a starting capital of 500,000 lire and established the largest film plant in the city for its productions.

One direct outcome of this patronage system was the sponsoring of historical films celebrating Italy's cultural heritage. The path was first indicated by the Turinese firm Ambrosio's effects-laden *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei* (*The Last Days of Pompeii*, 1908), the scale and success of which pushed most film companies to specialize in similar productions in subsequent years. Ambrosio itself quickly capitalized on *Pompei*'s triumph by launching the Serie d'Oro line of productions under director Luigi Maggi, chalking up another domestic and international hit with *Nerone* (*Nero, or The Fall of Rome*, 1909) the following year. Itala began systematically exploiting the genre around the same time, producing fifteen historical spectacle films between 1908 and 1911. The release of the epic *La caduta di Troia* (*The Fall of Troy*, 1911) made the company the first in Italy to institutionalize the longer two-reel format for its feature films, beginning a shift toward greater lengths that would culminate famously in Itala's monumental fourteen-reel *Cabiria* in 1914. Milano, meanwhile, focused most of its early years on the production of the five-reel feature – Italy's first – *L'Inferno* (*Dante's Inferno*, 1910), a monumental adaptation of Dante's classic two years in the making. Consisting of fifty-four tableaux-style scenes inspired by Gustave Doré's illustrations, *L'Inferno* was ecstatically greeted upon its release in 1910 as an emblem of Italy's cultural preeminence. "It seems," wrote one critic, "that one sole thought has inspired this project; … that of celebrating the greatest glory of our Italy with the cinema, that most modern of devices and that most efficacious of means for the diffusion of culture."[18]

Indeed, for a country that had achieved unity only decades before, Italy's storied and literary past became a crucial reference point for the

construction of national identity. Cinematic art was conceived firmly in the image of the state, such that the depiction of Italian history became an opportunity for nurturing spectatorship as a civic ideal. Discussing a historical film then in production, *Gioacchino Murat* (*Joachim Murat, from the Tavern to the Throne*, 1910), Milano's president, Count Venino, put the point explicitly: "Through instructive and educational films, my company tries to achieve financial as well as moral objectives. [We believe] that the representation of historical and moral subjects, the adaptation of literary and religious works, and the filming of domestic and foreign industries all constitute major advancements toward popular education and instruction."[19] For many critics and observers the strength of Italian film production came to be identified precisely with that of the state, and nationalist ideologies were transferred onto the film industry. One editorial from *La Cine-Fono*, for example, preached the importance of unifying the nation's film studios in language that unmistakably reflected the rhetoric of national unification of the Risorgimento: "If a utopia were able to become a reality: if Cines – Ambrosio – Milano-Film – Itala, etc. were able to become one single union, one unique creative center, then Italy's star would shine over every region."[20] At a time when Italy's power as a world player was still rather limited, the special artistry of Italian cinema became a touchstone for pride in the nation's cultural achievements – what film historian John David Rhodes describes as the "consolatory index of a fantasmatic national strength."[21]

Still, the question remains: in what did this special artistry consist? Two central tropes emerge from filmmaking practices of the period: first, the importance of the literary author as a term in Italian cinema's cultural ascendancy; second, the influence of a theatrical tradition of pictorialism as the primary mode of cinematic mise en scène. The tropes might seem to have been in tension with one another, inasmuch as one implied a literary conception of cinematic artistry, the other a theatrical one. Yet any sense of contradiction, I would argue, was subsumed by their shared allocation of functions: on the one hand, the authority of the literary artist over the filmic representation, insofar as the latter was to be attributed to the name of an individual author; on the other, the authority of the representation over the spectator, insofar as the films transmitted the meaning of history to

audiences through astonishing displays of theatricalized spectacle. In both respects, the aesthetics of wonderment associated with an earlier cinema of attractions was subsumed by, and made functional within, authoritative and "authorized" displays of patriotic cultural achievement.

On the issue of the author, for instance, it was a distinctive feature of the early Italian industry to have quickly seized upon cinema as a field for genuine literary accomplishment. The notion that the scenario was, in some sense, the supreme element in the making of a film was widely voiced in early Italian film criticism and accounts for the participation of many literary intellectuals in the nascent industry. Emblematic was Italy's most famous writer, Gabriele D'Annunzio, whose legendary collaboration with Giovanni Pastrone on the colossal *Cabiria* would mark the apotheosis of the discourse of the author in Italian cinema; but other *letterati*, such as Enrico Annibale Butti, Nino Martoglio, and Lucio D'Ambra, also lent their names and talents to the industry's cultural ambitions during these years. A literary model for film art was also evident in the campaign for "cinema literature" conducted in 1914 in the pages of the short-lived anti-Futurist biweekly, *Odiernismo* ("Todayism"), whose editors called for the publication of scenarios by Italian artists which exemplified the literary possibilities of this new type of writing.[22]

On the side of mise en scène, meanwhile, a commitment to spectacular scenography served as a kind of synecdoche for pride in the country's cultural heritage. The pictorial effects characteristic of nineteenth-century staging technique – the practice, that is, of staging pictorial tableaux or *coups de théâtre* as ways of underlining dramatic situations – survived in Italian features as a sensationalist conception of mise en scène linked to nationalist ideals. What counted was the staging of scenes that testified to the grandeur of Italy's past even as they supplied proof of the nation's continued artistic accomplishments into the present, as was clearly suggested by one reviewer's reflections on Ambrosio's *Pompei*: "[T]he scenes begin and follow one another in a crescendo of splendors, with a new, artistic sense of truth, of power, with an unsurpassable magnificence.… Suffice it to tell you with all honesty that after the film's projection there ran from my eyes tears of joy, and I felt, as I have few

times in my life, all the sense of our national artistic strength! Our beautiful and glorious art lives!”[23]

To illustrate the principles at work here, we might do no better than to turn to one of early Italian cinema’s landmark texts, a film whose textual processes serve as both cameo and mise en abîme of the construction of cinematic artistry during this period: Milano’s *L’Inferno*. Advertised through a series of illustrated spreads detailing the most crucial scenes, the film was, as already noted, promoted and received as a testimony to Italy’s national artistry. Yet its significance to the present argument lies in how artistry was here associated, not simply with Dante’s centrality to Italy’s literary heritage, but also with a singular mode of scenography and spectatorship through which that heritage was conveyed. Consisting of a series of single-shot tableaux, the film unfolds a catalogue of spectacular sensation scenes as Virgil displays to the poet Dante the sights of hell. The transformation of thieves into snakes (achieved through a stop-motion edit), the lustful dragged through a storm (double exposure), the giant three-headed Lucifer (again, double exposure and, in a separate shot, forced perspective) – these and other spectacles are presented to Dante according to a pedagogical logic of vision in which his role is simply to observe and learn. Dante’s position as spectator-within-the-film thus models that of the film viewer, and the film proposes within itself the dynamics of spectatorship characteristic of the Italian historical film in general. The magnificence of the spectacle becomes proof of what is shown – for Dante, of sin’s dreadful recompense, for the film viewer, of Italy’s cultural and cinematic achievement – and the image achieves its goal by means of an authoritarian distance that imposes an effect of mastery over its viewer. Cinematic art, in this sense, is nothing but the authority inherent in the concept of spectacle, in turn authorized by the assumed legacy of a past cultural greatness.

Figure 8.1 The poet Virgil shows Dante the souls of the lustful in *L’Inferno* (1910). Courtesy Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

2 Moral Reform and Mass Culture (the United States and France)

We now have all the necessary elements to inscribe a threefold definition of filmic “art” in relation to our earlier discussion of Rancière’s representative regime. First, the ideation of art depended upon a hierarchy of representations and genres whose points of reference corresponded to a hierarchical conception of the social order – a correspondence literalized in the Italian context through the involvement of the aristocracy in the nascent film industry. Second, that hierarchy prioritized representations inherited from the historicist tradition – an inheritance that accounts both for the content of these films (e.g., the heroic actions of historical epics and history paintings) and for the formal reliance on an aesthetic of mise en scène as a vehicle for staging pictorial tableaux. Third, such an aesthetic appropriated the aesthetic of wonderment associated with the earlier cinema of attractions to the spectacle of state and history – an appropriation that subordinated the democratizing impartiality of the motion picture image to

the ordering mechanisms of governmentality. All of these terms can be found, rearranged into somewhat different frameworks, in the American and French industries of the period, which can be dealt with here more briefly.

Like Italy's, the early US industry was profoundly shaped by a transformation in its class character; yet, whereas in Italy the crisis of 1908–9 pushed the industry into alliance with the nation's aristocracy, developments in the United States had led in a completely opposite class direction. There can be little doubt that the rapid spread of cheap, storefront nickelodeons after 1905 radically reshaped the social dynamics of early film spectatorship in America. Prior to the mid-1900s, most viewers in the United States had seen moving pictures at various different types of location – penny arcades, dime museums, and vaudeville shows, all of which had been accessible to both the working and white-collar classes – but the advent of the nickelodeon rendered moviegoing an unmistakably working-class and immigrant pastime, at least in the nation's larger cities.[24] In a context of unprecedented immigration, together with widening gulfs separating the culture of America's workers from that of the middle class, nickelodeons served their audiences as what Miriam Hansen terms an "alternative public sphere"; that is, they offered a "space apart" from the institutions and expectations of the dominant culture, allowing for norms of conviviality and communal interaction that also characterized other plebeian amusements of the time (such as dance halls, 10–20–30 melodrama, etc.).[25] As late as 1910, a Russell Sage Foundation survey claimed that fully 78 percent of New York City's moviegoers came from the blue-collar sector; and the film industry would remain colored by its negative association as a cheap amusement at least until World War I.[26]

This is not to say, however, that the cinema in the United States ever became "fully" plebeian – in the sense of being produced both *by* and *for* the popular classes – since actual ownership of the industry during this period was as completely in the hands of respectable, Anglo-Saxon Protestants as it ever was to be. The most famous name in the industry was, of course, Thomas Alva Edison, already a culture hero for the genteel middle classes. The largest American company, Vitagraph, was headed by

two British-born émigrés, Albert E. Smith and J. Stuart Blackton. Meanwhile, Biograph had been founded in the 1890s by W. K. L. Dickson and Henry Marvin – the latter an upstate New York manufacturer – and was taken over in 1908 by a New York City banker. In such a context, industry leaders and producers were forced to walk a fine line in balancing the needs of the plebeian audiences they actually had with the more "respectable" audiences they actually wanted. Russell Merritt has demonstrated that from the first, the nickelodeon "catered to him [the worker] through necessity, not through choice. The blue-collar worker and his family may have supported the nickelodeon. The scandal was no one connected with the movies much wanted his support."[27] Along similar lines, Noël Burch comments that "the path the cinema took [in the United States] implied the rejection of a whole social stratum despite the fact that most of its audience for more than five years came from that stratum."[28]

It was around these dichotomies of class that the conceptualization of filmic art first took shape in America, establishing a context in which art was firmly wedded to the project of social reform. The association of art and reform had long been part of the legacy of genteel liberalism in America, and in particular of the eminent English critic Matthew Arnold's sizable influence on that tradition. Arnold's famous definition of culture as "the best that has been thought and said in the world" – from his *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) – had become a slogan for allegiance to universal standards and deference to "great men of culture" who, on Arnold's model, should set themselves to the task of disseminating those standards. Culture here represented a defensive response to the factionalism of a modernizing society; it was, Arnold wrote, to provide a "great help out of our present difficulties," serving as a barrier against the "anarchy" that ensued from "doing what one's ordinary self likes."[29] It was, in sum, a pedagogical mandate to create hegemonically a unity out of irreducible heterogeneity.

The Arnoldian legacy thus supplied a framework for resolving the American film industry's class crisis: quality films would lure back the vanished middle-class audience even as they disseminated common standards among the nickelodeons' current clientele. This aim, moreover, would be achieved in emulation of the contemporaneous European

productions. Coverage of the French Film d'Art imports, for instance, asserted that these films "have been closely watched and studied by the more intelligent American producing forces, and to this is due in a great measure the remarkable improvements made all along the line."[30] The same held for Italian films which, beginning around 1911, were commonly roadshown at prestigious Broadway venues as part of a deliberate strategy of industry gentrification, and which similarly shaped American cinema's aesthetic and civic aspirations. (Indeed, it was the success of these imports that ultimately broke open the US market for domestically produced multi-reel films, as homegrown producers began to create their own epics to rival the Italian features.)[31]

Still, the relation between the American "qualities" and their European models was not a straightforward one. Unlike in Italy, for instance, the initial appearance of the quality film in the United States was less closely tied to representations of *national* history than to a *class-based* canon of approved Anglo-Saxon literary and historical themes. The vice-president of the Motion Picture Patents Company, Frank Dyer, indicated as much in 1910 when he glossed his gentrifying ambitions for the American film industry: "When the works of Dickens and Victor Hugo, the poems of Browning, the plays of Shakespeare and stories from the Bible are used as a basis for moving pictures, no fair-minded man can deny that the art is being developed along the right lines."[32] A similar pattern of emphasis was evident in the company most closely associated with quality productions, the Vitagraph Company of America ("the only one of the original motion picture companies that was founded entirely by Anglo-Saxons," according to a later report).[33] Thus, despite a handful of nationalistic pictures such as *Washington under the British Flag* and *Washington under the American Flag* (both 1909), the more common tendency at Vitagraph was to derive themes from European, and especially British, history and literature, e.g., *A Comedy of Errors* (1908), *Oliver Twist* (1909), *The Martyrdom of Thomas a Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury* (1910), *Vanity Fair* (1911), *Cardinal Wolsey* (1912), and *The Pickwick Papers* (1913), to name some representative titles.[34]

The interest of this difference lies in the light it sheds on the particularities of the US context, which possessed arguably the least integrated cultural system among the early film-producing countries. Whereas the notion of film art in Italy had operated as a metaphor for the greater glories of the state, no such equivalence could be posited in the United States, where the appeal to a singular national culture was far less able to hegemonize the various aspects of social life. This is not to say that early American filmmaking lacked nationalist content – film historians Charles Musser and Richard Abel have both shown how, at different times, US producers emphasized "American" themes as a way of distinguishing their product from that of European companies – but it is to insist that, in the case of the quality film genre, such nationalistic overtones remained initially muted.[35] (A nationalist emphasis would, however, become more pronounced in the early to mid-1910s, with the development of feature-length Indian pictures to rival the Italian epics, such as Kay-Bee's *The Invaders* [1912], and, more infamously, D. W. Griffith's Civil War reconstruction epic, *The Birth of a Nation* [1915].) The idea of culture consequently performed more of a mediating than a metaphorical role with respect to the idea of the nation, serving the consensus-building project of managing class and ethnic divisions through the diffusion of Anglo-Saxon values onto a heterogeneous American public. Such processes, in fact, illuminate the broader legacy of Progressive reform movements that, in following the Arnoldian directive to spread the "best" throughout society, were in effect scouting the pathways of an emerging mass culture. Genteel cultural ideologues seized upon new instruments of cultural diffusion – such as the burgeoning American publishing business, public lecture circuits, and the nascent film industry – to assist in the democratization of gentility by exposing more people to its moral and aesthetic ideals. In the process, they became an important harbinger of how technological advances in media dissemination were contributing new opportunities for the forging of mass ideological consensus.[36]

It is worth pushing this last point a little further, since a comparable claim might be made for the French quality productions. Following the influential success of *L'assassinat du duc de Guise*, developments within the French industry had similarly augured the dimensions of a modern mass culture,

only here with a crucial difference. In France, the quality film became the centerpiece of a hegemonic project that was not simply cross-class or cross-ethnic, but transnational in scope. As a means of furthering its global ambitions, Pathé had early on made moves to internationalize the *film d'art* as an exportable model of film production: thus, instead of Pathé's branches serving solely to distribute French-made material, the company's international affiliates were encouraged to mount their own "local" *films d'art*. In at least one case, that of Russia, this resulted in several of the founding films of the Russian cinema, while another of Pathé's franchises, Film d'Arte Italiana, supplied films that corresponded to the Italian industry's nation-building ambitions (e.g., *Françoise de Remini* [*Francesca da Rimini*] and *L'enlèvement des Sabines* [*The Rape of the Sabines*], both 1910). Nationalism thus acquired an international dimension: while French-made historical films and literary adaptations often had undoubtedly patriotic overtones – particularly in the context of France's then-popular Nationalist Revival movement – they also established strategies of production and systems of representation that could be and were exported elsewhere. The *global* aspirations that we recognize today as a term of cinematic mass culture were here inaugurated according to France's established *colonial* modes of production, whereby other nations were exploited both as sources of raw material (in this instance, locally specific literary and historical themes) and as markets for manufactured goods (the resulting films).

Aesthetic Regimes: Classical Cinema and the Avant-Garde

Yet if the quality film thus inaugurated the dynamics of cinematic mass culture, it was soon outstripped by those same processes, becoming a largely outmoded genre by the mid-1910s. The factors behind that decline will concern us presently; for the moment, however, it is worth tracking its implications for the historiography of early film. The tendency among historians of early film style has been to construct a unidirectional model of cinema's development, from the original "cinema of attractions" to a

"cinema of narrative integration," with an intervening transitional era roughly spanning the years 1908 to 1915.[37] Within this historical trajectory, moreover, the brief vogue of the quality film has usually been seen as a blind alley – an error, as it is often framed, in the elaboration of the new medium's expressive uses and possibilities. What I would like to propose at this point is a somewhat different reading that sees the failure of the quality film movement not as the necessary consequence of a fruitless detour, but as an essential moment in mapping the pathways of cinema's subsequent development. To assess this premise, moreover, I want to return to Rancière's distinction, introduced earlier, between "representative" and "aesthetic" regimes, and ask: how did the decline of the quality film necessitate new forms of thinking about art and cinema? And how did those new forms move beyond the parameters of representative art?

One option here was to rediscover cinematic art within the very properties that the quality films had subordinated to historicist spectacle; that is, to locate art not in the hierarchical, signifying structures of the state, but in the more properly aesthetic processes that permitted an experience of phenomena in their material immediacy, outside of hierarchy and signification. Nowhere was this path more apparent than in the developing body of French film criticism in the 1910s, which, beginning with the French-based, Italian-born writer Ricciotto Canudo's famous 1911 manifesto, "The Birth of a Sixth Art," explored a new conception of cinema as a medium for transcending and liquidating the codifications of other representational forms. For Canudo, cinema was a medium that synthesized the principles of the other arts, going beyond them to achieve a "superb conciliation of the Rhythms of Space (the Plastic Arts) and the Rhythms of Time (Music and Poetry)," what he called "Plastic Art in Motion."[38] Further, Canudo insisted equally that this *artistic* synthesis was at its core inseparable from a corresponding *social* synthesis, namely, the idea of festivity: "[W]hat is striking, characteristic, and significant, even more than the spectacle itself, is the uniform will of the spectators, who belong to all social classes, from the lowest and least educated to the most intellectual. It is desire for a new *Festival*, for a new joyous *unanimity*, realized at a show, in a place where together, all men can forget in greater or lesser measure, their isolated individuality."[39] Here, at the inception of the critical tradition

that would spawn the French avant-garde, we witness a switch in the polarities through which cinematic art was understood, a critical gesture that not only freed cinema from the established classifications of the other arts but did so in order to establish a newly democratic relation to its audience. The audience as a site of pedagogical instruction – subject to the spectacular pageantry of history or the moralizing tropes of reform – is here replaced with the audience as a festive or choric community.

Canudo's text laid the groundwork for a number of lines of thinking that would occupy French critics in subsequent years; and, although much of this writing tended to be unsystematic, certain themes can be identified. One of these lay in the refutation of theatrical practice as a model of cinematic artistry and, correspondingly, the assertion of film's autonomy as a technological medium. Writing in the publication *Ciné-Journal* in 1912, the French critic Yhcam (a pseudonym) explained that "The cinema spectacle is not a pale imitation of the theater; it is a separate spectacle" and associated this separateness with the medium's realism. "[T]he cinema spectacle can create impressions infinitely more vivid than the theater can, even though the characters are no more than mute shadows; and this is because the system of conventional gesture disappears to be replaced by an improbable realism."[40] Related to this was the repudiation of the older hierarchies of artistic genres, and here too a technological determination was often asserted: the motion picture became art as an impartial photographic witness of naked presence, of form and movement, unsullied by the classifying imperatives of figurative representation. It was this position, for instance, that was taken up by the Russian-born artist Léopold Survage, writing in the last issue of Apollinaire's *Les soirées de Paris*, in which he sketched his ideas for a non-representational cinema based on visual form ("which is abstract"), rhythm ("movement and the changes which visual form undergoes"), and color.[41] According to this reasoning, even travelogues could be prized for their aesthetic qualities, as when Louis Delluc wrote in 1917 of their "impressions of evanescent beauty" as a fulfillment of cinema's destiny.[42] Aesthetic experience, in short, became coterminous with the universe of the sensible, and cinematic art the means for precipitating such experiences in visible form, in time and space.

A second path – exemplified above all by the American cinema – lay in a process of hybridization that sought, not the subordination of aesthetic to representative elements (as in the quality film), nor the full displacement of representative structures (as in the incipient French avant-garde), but instead a more lasting integration of the two levels. The point here is again suggested by Rancière, who in *La fable cinématographique* notes that a positive contradiction – between elements of the representative and aesthetic regimes – is operative in classical cinema. On the one hand, the medium's photographic realism materially fulfilled the aesthetic definition of art as a democratically "impartial" form, grounded in a regime of vision open to the contingency of all things; on the other, the classical film became an art of fiction that retained many of the genres, codes, and conventions that the aesthetic regime had put into question.[43] The constitution of classical film style in the United States thus entailed a hybridization of realist elements derived from early actuality films (authentic locations, mobile framings, greater variety of camera distance and angle) with the generic classifications of the narrative film, a tendency which systematically increased from 1907 on, when the production of actualities as a distinct genre dropped drastically.[44]

It is important to see how this formation of a hybrid artistic identity developed in the context of the US film industry. The decisive fact is that the American cinema's commercial orientation as a for-profit medium ultimately entailed compromises with the high cultural appeal associated with cinema's earlier use as a tool of uplift. Exemplary here was the development of the Paramount Pictures Corporation, a distribution concern launched by W. W. Hodkinson in May 1914. Founded with the stated ambition of "supply[ing] the exhibitor with a program of such advanced standard as to elevate … the exhibiting branch of the industry in all parts of the world," and boasting prestigious contracts to bring to the screen the stage productions of Charles Frohman and David Belasco, Paramount was among a number of American companies during this period that sought a corporate basis for industry uplift based on the cultural cachet of the feature film.[45] Yet the dilemma of uplift was that genteel notions of art were, by this point, out of step with the industry's market forces, which pressured film companies to reach as large a market share as possible. Almost from

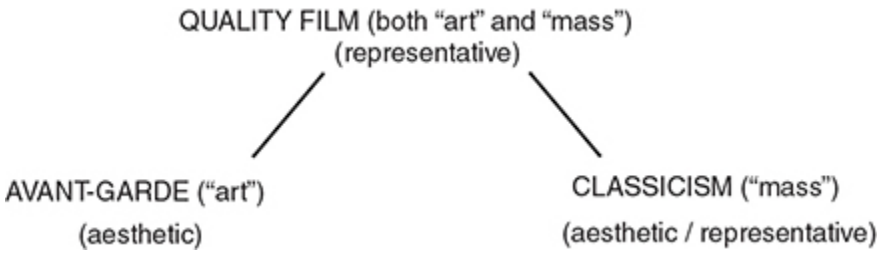
the start, Paramount's output was tailored less to Arnoldian standards of distinction than to a newer ethos of opulent fantasy and sentiment, evident, for instance, in the Mary Pickford vehicle *Cinderella* (1914), in L. Frank Baum's *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* (1914), and elsewhere. The idea of uplift had simply become the alibi under which a new cross-class entertainment ethos was developing. More telling still was the fate of the short-lived Triangle Film Corporation, established in 1915 in emulation of the Paramount model. A distribution company bringing together the talents of producers D. W. Griffith, Thomas Ince, and Mack Sennett, along with some of the era's most noted stage actors, the Triangle Film Corporation was launched in an explicit attempt to market "highbrow" pictures to a cross-class audience. (The films, according to initial publicity, would be "made for the masses, with an appeal to the classes.")[46] Only a year after its birth, however, Triangle was on the brink of financial disarray, having failed to attract audiences of any class, and was forced to limp on by exploiting the popular appeal of Sennett's slapstick comedies.[47]

The pattern is one identified by Max Weber: the dynamics of the market require the dehierarchization of culture, forcing cultural entrepreneurs to mix genres and categories to reach the broadest audience.[48] This, of course, held true not only for the development of the American cinema but for the commercial mainstream of all the industries discussed in this essay. It is clear, for example, from the weekly listings of French releases that, by 1912, the French cinema was trending away from historical features toward more contemporary, popular genres, melodrama in particular.[49] A similar development was evident in Italy, where national epics began to give ground to the so-called "dramatic-passionate" genre, starring divas such as Francesca Bertini, Lyda Borelli, and others. What was nonetheless distinctive in the American context was the way these shifts were fueled by the emergence of a classical, editing-based aesthetic. The rapid development of editing techniques in US cinema of the early 1910s created notable differences from European stylistic norms, which remained rooted in a pictorial, long-take approach; here too impetus came from the commercial imperative of mass appeal within the divided US class context. Film historians have debated the social determinants of classical film style;

that is, whether classicism emerged from an attempt to aid narrative comprehension for working-class filmgoers unfamiliar with stories from the genteel literary canon; or whether, contrariwise, it was driven by the goal of appealing to middle-class spectators by introducing values of narrative causality and psychological motivation into cinematic narration.[50] Regardless, the result was the same: the growth of principles of visualization – including close-ups, shot-reverse shot structures, and other strategies of editing within scenic space – that replaced the authoritarian distance enshrined in historicist spectacle with new mechanisms of ideological positioning and viewer identification. The opposition between representative and aesthetic modes thus dissolved in a new cross-class schema that retained a hegemonic orientation even as it declassified the *grand genre* of historicism.

Histories of Early Cinema: Rancière and Film Historiography

There emerges here a sense in which the legacy of the quality film might finally be understood according to the logic of what Fredric Jameson calls the "vanishing mediator"; that is, a term that reconciles opposites only to sink into invisibility once that reconciliation is achieved.[51] In the case of the quality film, I have suggested, concepts of "art" and "mass" were briefly synthesized in relation to the historicist strategies of the *representative* regime; yet the decline of the quality film soon fractured this fragile synthesis to reposition the two concepts against one another – this time, however, in relation to the *aesthetic* regime. The banner of art would be taken up by the relatively pure aestheticism of the French avant-garde, of which the critical essays of Canudo, Yhcam, and others were important precursors; meanwhile, in the United States, cinema's emerging potential as a mass medium witnessed the emergence of hybrid strategies of commercial appeal and the dehierarchization of older representative forms. The process can be represented thus, with Rancière's terminology included in the lower parentheses:



It is, furthermore, in the passage between these levels that it becomes possible to rethink the process by which cinema has often been said to have found its "identity." As noted at the outset of this essay, the story of cinema's early development has traditionally been told as the emergence and evolution of film-specific stylistics – that is, as a transition from an immature dependency on other arts to the unfurling of devices specific to the medium's ontology (e.g., classical editing techniques, the photographic rendering of motion, etc.). Yet the transition described above suggests a different characterization, a way of viewing cinema's development not in terms of the gradual unfolding of unique and supposedly immanent principles of style but rather as a complex series of transitions between larger systems of artistic practice, from the representative to the aesthetic. My point here is close to that of André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, who have recently contended that "it is through intermediality … that a medium is [first] understood," arguing for a perspective that would see early cinema, not in terms of a uniquely singular medium identity, but rather as a way of presenting and extrapolating already established artistic forms and practices.[52] Yet whereas these authors emphasize the intermedial relations linking early film to *specific* artistic practices (e.g., the stage, magic lantern shows, etc.), my emphasis is on the broader *context* of artistic regimes within which cinema's formal devices registered their significance. The photographic reproduction of movement and the later development of classical editing strategies may well have been unique expressive forms; still, they acquired their importance only to the extent that they contributed to the broader declassification of genres and representational codes characteristic of the aesthetic era – a process evident also in the cross-class dissemination of "low" commercial genres (slapstick, the western, popular melodrama, etc.) as in the new avant-gardist attention paid to the non-figurative qualities of plastic movement and rhythm. Whether as mainstream classicism or as avant-garde experiment, cinema's vaunted

specificity was forged in the passage beyond the aristocratic hierarchies of representative art.

But this is not the only narrative of early film history that might need to be rethought, leading me to a second point. For what is also at stake is the basic question of how we might conceptualize the changing forms of early film practice as a particular kind of historical sequence. Here we can return to a consideration of the historical framework that has informed most recent discussions of early cinema's development; that is, the model of a formal transition from an attractions-based aesthetic to classical narrative technique. One immediate difficulty with such an approach – already hinted at earlier – is that it inevitably renders eccentric those cinematic forms that stood outside that transition, whether in the supposed dead end of the quality film (which retained a *tableau*-style of framing even while other filmmakers were refining cinema's narrative editing techniques) or in the oppositional gestures of the early avant-garde (which began to pursue non-narrative goals at a time when the international film industry's chief commodity was the story film). But what further remains undertheorized is how the varying forms of early cinema might be integrated into a broader understanding of cinema's contested place within the new mass culture – in particular, the way in which early cinema can be approached as a series of responses to the new social and cultural formations associated with the idea of the "masses." Important as the transition to classical film technique may have been, historians tracing that development have not provided a philosophically compelling synthesis for comparing the relations between cinematic, social, and cultural orders as these existed across the *range* of film practice during the period of early twentieth-century mass society.

This is where Rancière is helpful. For this thinker, as we have already seen, art and politics are consubstantial insofar as they each organize a common world of self-evident facts and sensory perception. Applied to early cinema, such a perspective permits the shift of accent that decenters narrowly formal issues to foreground instead the concepts of political ordering and cultural hierarchization. The changing forms of early cinema here appear not as the unfolding of an artistic destiny immanent to film's unique identity, nor simply as the passage toward classical technique, but instead as a complex series of attempts to find aesthetic forms pertinent to

cinema's social functioning as a mass medium. This essay has traced three such forms: the short-lived vogue of the quality film, which harnessed cinema to the authority and representative tropes of historicist spectacle; the aesthetic forms of the incipient avant-garde, attached to a choric conception of community and a delegitimation of social and artistic hierarchies; and, mediating these poles, the development of classicism as a cross-class style that declassified older generic canons even as it retained the hegemonic operations first inaugurated with the quality film. These categories have only been briefly sketched, but hopefully define a topology for rethinking the processes of cinema's emergence, pointing to new ways of conceptualizing the spectrum of early cinematic forms as a staging of social forms and their possibilities. To quote one of the founding insights of cultural theory: "There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses" – ways of seeing, moreover, that became explicit and recognizable in the changing artistic regimes of early cinema.[53]

Notes

1 Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures," in *Three Essays on Style* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 95.

2 The term "promiscuous intertextuality" is from Tom Gunning, "The Intertextuality of Early Cinema: A Prologue to *Fantômas*," in *A Companion to Literature and Film*, eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 130.

3 Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

4 Ivo Blom, "*Quo Vadis?* From Painting to Cinema and Everything in Between," in *La decima musa: il cinema e le altre arti*, eds. Leonardo Quaresima and Laura Vichi (Udine: Forum, 2001), 281–92.

5 On the idea of a "selective tradition," see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 115–16.

6 Blom, "*Quo Vadis?*," 284–5.

7 William Uricchio and Roberta E. Pearson, *Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), chap. 3.

8 On middlebrow culture, see, in particular, Joan Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), chap. 1.

9 Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007), 12.

10 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (New York: Continuum, 2004), 22.

11 Ibid., 23–4.

12 Rancière, *Future of the Image*, 13.

13 Quoted in Stephen Bottomore, "1896: Ain't It Lifelike!," *Sight and Sound* 51, no. 4 (1982): 295. Emphasis added.

14 I am referring here, of course, to Roland Barthes's celebrated distinction between the *studium* and the *punctum*, from *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Flamingo, 1984).

15 Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, 13.

16 Both the concept of the "national popular" and its methodological pairing with reform derive from Gramsci, from the outline of *The Modern Prince* in the prison essay "Brief Notes on Machiavelli's Politics." Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 130.

17 *Cafè Chantant e RFC*, March 26, 1909, 9, quoted in Aldo Bernardini, "An Industry in Recession: The Italian Film Industry, 1908–1909," *Film History* 3, no. 4 (1989): 343.

18 "La 'Divina Comedia' della Milano-Films," *La Cine-Fono*, June 11, 1910, 11, quoted in John David Rhodes, "'Our Beautiful and Glorious Art Lives': The Rhetoric of Nationalism in Early Film Periodicals," *Film History* 12, no. 3 (2000): 315–16.

19 "L'aristocrazia Milanese per una film d'arte," *La Sera*, October 1, 1910, 3, quoted in Raffaele De Berti, "Milano Films: The Exemplary History of a Film Company of the 1910s," *Film History* 12, no. 3 (2000): 278.

20 "L'affermazione della cinematografica italiania: Il trionfo della 'Cines'," *La Cine-Fono*, April 15, 1911, 5, quoted in Rhodes, "'Our Beautiful and Glorious Art Lives'," 317.

21 Rhodes, "'Our Beautiful and Glorious Art Lives'," 312.

22 On *Odiernismo*, see John P. Welle, "Film on Paper: Early Italian Cinema Literature, 1907–1920," *Film History* 12, no. 3 (2000): 291–2.

23 "Impressioni … carezze e graffi: *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*," *La Cine-Fono*, December 4, 1908, 6, quoted in Rhodes, "'Our Beautiful and Glorious Art Lives'," 312.

24 The same dynamic did not, however, pertain to small-town and rural centers in the United States, where exhibitors remained dependent on a mixed-class family trade during this period. See, for instance, the essays in Kathryn H. Fuller-Seeley's collection, *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

25 Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), chap. 3.

26 The 1910 Russell Sage survey is cited in Russell Merritt, "Nickelodeon Theaters, 1905–1914: Building an Audience for the Movies," in *The American Film Industry*, ed. Tino Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 87.

27 Ibid.

28 Noël Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 109.

29 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism* (London: Smith, Elder, 1869), vii, viii, 108.

30 "First in Pantomime Art," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, May 1, 1909, 38, quoted in Uricchio and Pearson, *Reframing Culture*, 52.

31 See Richard Abel, *Americanizing the Movies and "Movie-Mad" Audiences, 1910–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), chap. 1.

32 Frank L. Dyer, "The Moral Development of the Silent Drama," *Edison Kinetogram*, April 15, 1910, 11, quoted in Uricchio and Pearson, *Reframing Culture*, 48.

33 William Basil Courtney, "History of Vitagraph," *Motion Picture News*, February 7, 1925, 342, quoted in Siobhan B. Somerville, "The Queer Career of Jim Crow: Racial and Sexual Transformation in *A Florida*

Enchantment," in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, eds. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 258.

34 On the Vitagraph quality films, see Uricchio and Pearson's superb *Reframing Culture*, to which much of my analysis is here indebted.

35 Charles Musser, "At the Beginning: Motion Picture Production, Representation and Ideology at the Edison and Lumière Companies," in *The Silent Cinema Reader*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer (London: Routledge, 2004), 15–40; Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

36 Rubin, *Making of Middlebrow Culture*, especially chap. 1.

37 The quoted terms are Tom Gunning's, as developed most significantly in his landmark study, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

38 Ricciotto Canudo, "The Birth of a Sixth Art" [1911], in Richard Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism 1907–1939: A History/Anthology*, vol. 1, *1907–1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 59.

39 Ibid., 65.

40 Yhcam, "Cinematography" [1912], in Abel, *French Film Theory*, 69.

41 Léopold Survage, "Colored Rhythm" [1914], in Abel, *French Film Theory*, 91.

42 Louis Delluc, "Beauty in the Cinema" [1917], in Abel, *French Film Theory*, 137.

43 Jacques Rancière, *La fable cinématographique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001).

44 It is thus appropriate to think of classicism not simply as a norm-bound system of cinematic storytelling – a common presupposition of much neo-formalist analysis – but rather as a kind of "system in tension" whose normative codes and signifying structures are inevitably cut across by uncodified contingency and sensory immediacy. My point here parallels those of other scholars who have detected in classicism a countervailing tendency toward "excess," often associated with classicism's latent melodramatic mode. See Rick Altman, "Dickens, Griffith, and Film Theory Today," in *Classical Hollywood Narrative: The Paradigm Wars*,

ed. Bill Nichols (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 9–47; and Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O. J. Simpson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), chap. 1.

45 "Feature Producers Affiliate," *Moving Picture World* 20, no. 9 (May 30, 1914): 1268.

46 "'Sig,' $4,000,000 Production Company Is Launched," *Motion Picture News*, July 17, 1915, 41–2.

47 See my essay "'Made for the Masses with an Appeal to the Classes': The Triangle Film Corporation and the Failure of Highbrow Film Culture," *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 2 (2005): 3–33.

48 Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vol. 2, trans. Ephraim Fischoff (1924; reprint, New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 937.

49 Abel, *Ciné Goes to Town*, 325.

50 The two explanatory models are those of Janet Staiger and Tom Gunning, respectively. See Janet Staiger, "Rethinking 'Primitive' Cinema: Intertextuality, the Middle-Class Audience, and Reception Studies," in *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 101–23; and Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith*, especially chap. 4.

51 Fredric Jameson, "The Vanishing Mediator; or, Max Weber as Storyteller," in *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971–1986*, vol. 2, *Syntax of History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 3–34.

52 André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, "A Medium Is Always Born Twice…," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2005): 7. See also the afterword in Giorgio Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema: Race, Landscape, and the Picturesque* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 276–91.

53 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780–1950* (New York: Columbia Press, 1958), 300.

9

Sensationalism and Early Cinema

Annemone Ligensa

The cinematograph is not the mirror image of modern life, but only of its excesses: the extreme, the exciting, the sensational.

(Walther Conradt, 1910) [1]

Introduction

Contemporaries regarded early cinema as the epitome of sensationalism, and not just during its first years of "attractions," but well after the emergence of longer narrative films. Despite the frequent references to it in discourses on the new medium, sensationalism has received relatively little attention in film studies. [2] More extensive scholarship exists in connection with other media and in other disciplines, such as literary studies, journalism studies, and media psychology. In the course of this essay, I will present examples from the historical discourse on sensationalism and examine some of its claims with the help of current knowledge from diverse disciplines, with particular emphasis on psychological factors.

In his study of American sensational melodrama, Ben Singer has drawn upon the so-called "history of vision" debate, the most prominent protagonists of which are Tom Gunning and David Bordwell. [3] At least since Karl Marx, cultural critics have claimed that sensual experience is subject to historical change. [4] Since media and other forms of entertainment involve sensual perception, some of the most influential critics of modernization, [5] such as Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin, have applied

and elaborated this idea in their theories of art and popular culture. Like many of their contemporaries, they believed that media sensationalism is somehow connected with what they experienced as the overstimulation and stress of industrialization, urbanization, modern means of communication and transportation, etc. Such contemporary (or near-contemporary) critics are still drawn upon today (by Gunning, for example), often without questioning their psychological explanations or even whether their experience is representative. [6] In contrast, theorists who draw on cognitive and evolutionary psychology (such as Bordwell) have argued that sensual perception is a psychophysiological function that is biologically determined and hence largely unchanging. As Noël Carroll [7] and also Frank Kessler [8] have shown, part of this debate is merely due to differences in the definitions of basic concepts such as "perception." Singer has taken a mediating position in this debate, using current psychological knowledge to examine some of the claims of contemporary theories. Even though I do not agree with all of his conclusions, I feel that his work is the most fruitful, especially as he has discussed sensational melodrama in particular.

Specifically, I would like to show that sensationalism *per se* is not an essentially modern phenomenon, but that only the term was new, and that the media that exploited it as well as the theories with which it was explained changed over time. Hence what was specific to early cinema and what was not can only be understood in a much broader view. Furthermore, response to sensationalism varied greatly, between both cultures and individuals, to an extent that has so far gone unrecognized. Therefore I believe that both more nuanced descriptions and alternative explanations are necessary, which can be found in current psychology. For the purpose of cultural comparison, which I can only undertake by way of examples, of course, I will look at Britain and Germany. The discourses from these countries are of particular relevance, because Britain was a major origin of sensationalism, while many of the critics of modernization who are still drawn upon today were German.

The Concept and Phenomenon of Sensationalism

Tom Gunning has remarked that "[o]ne could argue for the term ["sensation"] being one of the key words of the popular culture of modernity." [9] The original meaning of "sensation" is, of course, sense perception. Around 1900, "sensation" in its newer sense and the one related to media was a term that was widely used in many languages. [10] A Swedish encyclopedia from 1917 carried a particularly clear and concise definition: "*Sensational*: highly arousing of attention, suspenseful. *Sensational article, sensational narrative, sensational news, sensation novel*: essay, narrative, news item, novel that intends to create a strong impression or succeeds in doing so. *Sensation drama*: play that intends to create strong effects. *Sensation press*: Newspapers that gain attention by elaborate and suspenseful relation of crimes, salacious events, scandals, political rumors etc., even when this is achieved at the cost of truth." [11]

Interestingly, in German a complete shift in meaning took place, whereas other languages retained the original meaning along with the newer one, which may be a reflection of the fact that Germans tended to dislike foreign words in general and sensationalism very much in particular. [12] Surprisingly, it is not known when or where exactly the newer meaning originated. It seems to have appeared in the first half of the nineteenth century. Contemporary British critics often claimed that the phenomenon as well as the term first appeared in the United States (the penny press and railway literature were mentioned as examples). This may or may not be true, and it would be very welcome if scholars of American literature and culture would look into this claim. [13] In any case, the reference to American culture was usually connected with a censorious view of "modern times," because the United States was regarded as the spearhead of modernization. According to one anonymous author, however, there may have been a degree of projection involved in such views: "We owe the epithet 'sensation' to the candid or reckless vulgarity of the Americans. It is intended to express that quality in art, circumstances, entertainments,

politics, and social events, which rouses and gratifies their constitutional excitability. We have hitherto been without some similar word in England only because we have shrunk from the last infirmity of acknowledging our need of it. Yet it may be doubted whether the characteristic which has given rise to the term did not originate with ourselves rather than with the Americans." [14]

The fact that the term was new and that many contemporary observers already connected it with a critique of modernization may tempt one to regard it as a modern phenomenon. Charles Dickens, however, who was quite partial to sensationalism himself (and whom Sergei Eisenstein famously regarded as a proto-cineaste), [15] already expressed doubts about this:

> It is much the fashion now to dwell with severity on certain morbid failings and cravings of the grand outside public – the universal customer – the splendid bespeaker [*sic*], who goes round every market, purse in hand, and orders plays, poems, novels, pictures, concerts, and operas. Not by any means a grudging purchaser, or one to drive a hard churlish bargain, he is ready with a good price for a good thing – a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, and all other suitable sentiments. Yet, because this faithful patron chooses to have his meats highly spiced and flavoured, the cry is, an unnatural appetite for *sensation*!… This hungering after "sensation" is a diseased and morbid appetite, something novel and significant of degeneration. And yet this taste for fiery sauces, and strongly-seasoned meats and drinks, is of very ancient date; nay, with the public – so long as it has been a public – it has been a constant taste.… Such devices were popular years and years ago, and the dramatic "sensation," more or less modified, will always be in favour. [16]

Press histories suggest that the central characteristics of the phenomenon precede both the term as well as modernization, at least in the narrow sense. [17] Furthermore, criticism of sensationalism regularly emerges in connection with new media. For example, the following remarks about the so-called *Neue Zeitungen* (broadsheet newspapers) by a German critic in 1695 are remarkably similar to the concerns about early cinema: "They not only report on adultery, prostitution, theft, manslaughter, treason and how

all this was artfully committed and concealed, but how a particular piece of knavery was planned and executed is described in such detail that those who are inclined to evil can learn a full lesson how to do the same." [18] Many commentators, such as Ernst Schultze, writing in 1911, simply regarded cinema as an even greater threat than the printed word because it was more accessible and vivid: "The content of many a depiction follows the same path as cheap fiction [19] to a significant extent, with the difference that the cinematograph is able to present the glory of a life of crime, the magnificence of detective work, far more vividly than the printed word. A jumble of blood and corpses, of murder and violence, disgusting passions and hypocritical backstairs romance pours into the souls of hundreds of thousands, even millions of cinema viewers. The worldview of these viewers must necessarily be affected." [20]

In fact, because sensationalism was regarded as catering to "base instincts," many contemporary observers interpreted it as a symptom of barbarism rather than modernization. An event that shocked not only art historians in the nineteenth century was the discovery of the erotic artefacts of Pompeii, [21] which became a popular example of the downfall of a highly developed culture for cultural critics who regarded their own era as one of "decadence" and "degeneration." [22] By contrast, in 1913 Holbrook Jackson described the British *fin de siècle* as a period not only of "variety" and "novelty," but of "daring," "exotic," and sometimes even "bizarre" courage. He regarded it not as a time of degeneration, but of "regeneration" – i.e., as "anything but melancholy or diseased.… The very pursuit was a mode of life sufficiently joyful to make life worth living. But in addition there was the feeling of expectancy, born not alone of a mere toying with novel ideas, but born equally of a determination to taste new sensation, even at some personal risk, for the sake of life and growth." [23] Hence, concerns about media sensationalism, whether explicitly or implicitly, were part of the more general question around whether modernization was a process of improvement or decline (or a paradoxical combination of both). [24] Obviously, such a dauntingly complex question is difficult if not impossible to answer with any degree of objectivity.

Explanations of Sensationalism

In the nineteenth century, the cultural criticism of sensationalism, most likely due to the psychophysiological connotations of the term, became connected with theories of "modern nervousness" (or "neurasthenia"), which claimed to have a basis in science. [25] Philosophy, psychology, and physiology were in a rapid process of development and differentiation around 1900. [26] But many scholars still moved very freely between them. Some ideas that emerged at the time still hold up remarkably well, others do not. Many scholars who draw on the cultural criticism of Georg Simmel [27] and Walter Benjamin [28] today still quote the psychophysiological elements of their theories, but do not discuss them in detail, nor question them. [29]

The contemporary argument for how the stressors [30] of modern urban life created the demand for sensationalist entertainment usually ran as Wilhelm Erb formulated it in his 1893 treatise on "modern nervousness":

> The exhausted nerves seek recuperation in increased stimulation, in highly-seasoned pleasures, only thereby to become more exhausted than before; modern literature is concerned predominantly with the most questionable problems, those which stir all the passions – sensuality and the craving for pleasure, contempt of every fundamental ethical principle and every ideal demand; it brings pathological types, together with sexual psychopathic, revolutionary and other problems, before the mind of the reader. Our ears are excited and overstimulated by large doses of insistent and noisy music. The theaters captivate all the senses with their exciting modes of presentation; the creative arts turn also by preference to the repellent, ugly and suggestive, and do not hesitate to set before us in revolting realism the ugliest aspect offered by actuality. [31]

Interestingly, Sigmund Freud was one of the few cultural critics at the time who did not follow this line of argument (he believed that modern sexual repression created "modern nervousness"). [32] Several years later, Benjamin gave the basic argument a slightly different and perhaps somewhat more sympathetic twist: he claimed that modern individuals used "shocking" entertainment, particularly cinema, to inoculate themselves

against the stressors of modern life: “Film is the art form corresponding to the increased threat to life that faces people today. Humanity’s need to expose itself to shock effects represents an adaptation to the dangers threatening it. Film corresponds to profound changes in the apparatus of apperception – changes that are experienced on a scale of private existence by each passerby in big city traffic, and on a historical scale by every present-day citizen.” [33] Benjamin based this on Freud’s theory of trauma (in a way that Freud had not applied it himself).

To discuss the psychophysiological details of these theories as adequately as they deserve would take more space than is available here. Instead, I will draw upon what is known about the behavior of audiences to argue that both empirical evidence as well as alternative theories exist that call the common claims of cultural critics into question.

First, Emilie Altenloh, in her 1913 dissertation on cinemagoing in Mannheim and Heidelberg, [34] noted that there was no noticeable difference in the interest in cinema expressed by natives and long-term inhabitants of the city on the one hand and recent migrants or commuters from the country on the other. Furthermore, as Joseph Garncarz has shown in Chapter 17 of this volume, itinerant film shows were very successful with rural audiences, whose environment was hardly touched by modernization at the time. Hence it was obviously not necessary to be an urbanite to understand and enjoy early cinema.

Second, the usual response to physical exhaustion is not to seek more stimulation, but rest. Industrial workers who had strenuous jobs and little spare time related that they particularly enjoyed relaxing activities, such as spending time with their family, going to a pub with a friend, taking a walk, etc. [35] Hence, not stress, but the increase of leisure is more likely to have furthered activities such as cinemagoing. [36]

Third, as some contemporaries already argued, stimulation, and not just its reduction, is a basic need. [37] Physiological arousal is the state of being alive, awake, alert, etc. Individuals aim to achieve what in current psychology is called an “optimal level of arousal.” [38] There are many anecdotal reports of very poor – i.e., hardly “blasé” (in Simmel’s terms) –

people going to quite remarkable lengths to enrich an environment that they experienced as sensory deprivation rather than sensory overload. For example, the London social worker Maud Stanley complained in 1878 that one of the women she visited had bought a few pictures with the first money her husband had brought home after a long period of unemployment, during which one of the children had even died of starvation, because "she could not live with bare walls." [39] A 1911 Berlin censorship report expressed consternation that a miner had spent 30 marks on an illustrated book about the love life of the Japanese. [40] In Altenloh's study, a worker poignantly claims, "I've gone without food to go to the theater." [41] What was new about modern mass media then, especially cinema, was that they provided stimulation that was relatively cheap and accessible, exciting yet safe, and thus pleasurable.

But was this need for stimulation itself produced by modernization, as cultural critics have claimed (by referring to concepts such as "modern nervousness")? With regard to the fundamental question whether modern commercial entertainment produced new desires or catered to preexisting ones, the socialist scholar Dietrich Mühlberg has argued: "It can be observed that the market has reacted with some delay to reproductive needs and the monetary demand connected with them, just like the state and the church have. As a rule, they did not create needs, but responded to them and thus determined the form of their satisfaction. Only this delay can explain the fast acceptance and spread of various offers. Examples are beer, pubs, mass produced fiction, cinema, wall hangings, etc." [42] Charles M. Smith's 1857 book on London opens with a chapter on the "amusements of the moneyless," which supports this argument:

> A list of the amusements and recreations of London, were it only those of a single season, would be a catalogue comprising everything which the talent, the enterprise, and the ingenuity of men have accomplished for the gratification of their fellows' curiosity – their love of the beautiful, their sense of humour, their literary and artistic predilections, and their peculiar tastes, whether refined by cultivation on the one hand, or coarse and demoralising on the other. Fancies and hobbyhorses the oddest, the most grotesque and whimsical, have their enthusiastic patrons and

> votaries in this all-embracing metropolis. We might run down the scale from a morning concert at Hanover Square, admission one guinea, to a midnight dog-show, or a duel of rats at Whitechapel, entrance twopence, including a ticket for beer; and, in the course of the descent, we should light upon whole classes of exhibitions which one half the world would as carefully avoid, as the other half would eagerly seek out. But such a catalogue, comprehensive as it would be, would embrace very few indeed of the gratuitous entertainments with which the masses of London are amused. The number of those who cannot afford to pay for recreation is, probably, quite as large as those who can. To them it matters nothing that the theatres, the music-halls, the casinos, the gala-gardens, the panoramas, or the free-and-easys, the public-houses, and the gin-shops, stand perpetually open. They have no money to expend for purposes of amusement, and must be recreated gratis, if recreated at all. Confessedly, the amusements provided for the populace are too few – that item appears to have been entirely left out of the calculations of the authorities.… But, says the bard of Rydal Mount [William Wordsworth] – "pleasure is spread through the earth. In stray gifts, to be claimed by whoever shall find"; and amusement is spread through the metropolis in the same way; and so it is that the needy Londoner has a share in recreations and enjoyments of which his brother rustic knows nothing. Let us glance at a few of these "stray gifts," and note how they are relished. [43]

Smith goes on to describe military parades, launchings of ships, boat races, street performers, the comings-and-goings of the Houses of Parliament, strollers in Hyde Park, Punch-and-Judy shows, shop windows ("the veritable Great Exhibition"), and criminal courts. He even mentions the fact that people waited for patrons leaving the theater early to ask them for their tickets in order to see the rest of the show. It is precisely this gap that cinema came to fill.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, according to current psychology, individuals differ greatly regarding their stimulation preferences, according to factors such as culture, gender, social class, age, and even personality. [44] Not only basic perceptual processes, but even differing perceptual dispositions are partly innate, so that there is a limit to how much can be

shaped by socialization. Hence, given the opportunity, people tend to choose leisure activities according to their dispositions. To take a simple example: few people who get sick on roller coasters would repeat the activity often enough to get used to it, as far as that is even possible. Interestingly, Altenloh already observed that children differed regarding the interest in stimulation, and that this did not seem to be related to their social environment: “It is impossible to explain this negative result [i.e., the fact that some children did not participate in any cultural activities at all] with reference to specific conditions within the children’s social environment, since this figure [20 percent] includes children of both skilled and unskilled laborers as well as those of artisans and low-ranking civil servants. Rather, the cause is most likely to be found in psychological factors, in a certain listlessness [*Stumpfheit*] on the part of the children surveyed towards the world around them in general.” [45] Even though Altenloh was highly critical of cinema herself, she did at least acknowledge that the interest in stimulation was something (potentially) positive.

The interpretations of cultural critics probably arose in part from their own responses and values, and many contemporaries who did not articulate themselves in writing may well have shared them, i.e., they often experienced modernization as stressful and modern art and entertainment as sensory overload – but not everyone did. Ironically, early cinema itself provides visual testimony of this. Frank Kessler’s discussion of the Lumière view *Berlin – Potsdamer Platz* (1896) and a comment on the film in a German provincial newspaper illustrate differing responses to the city and to cinema simultaneously: “With the view *Potsdamer Platz* one feels spontaneously transported to the big city. The cabs, the horse-drawn trams and buses, the passers-by anxiously making their way, all this provides a life-like image of the enormous traffic in the metropolis.” [46] Kessler analyzes it thus:

> While this statement could be seen as an almost perfect illustration of Benjamin’s observations, the Lumière view itself, interestingly, hardly supports such a reading. The passers-by seem not at all frightened; they routinely and skilfully circulate between the numerous vehicles, apparently unaffected by the dense traffic that surrounds them. The anonymous journalist from the provincial newspaper may actually have

> projected his or her – and/or possibly the potential readership's – feelings about the big city onto the images on the screen. The view conveys a fascination with the spectacular rush of urban traffic rather than a feeling of threat or anxiety. The comment published in the *Provinzialzeitung*, however, indicates the range of reactions such images could provoke. Whether pleasurable or menacing – in this film the Lumière cameraman, by choosing this particular point of view, turns metropolitan life into an attraction: a spectacle of multi-layered movements, a constant renewal of sights to see, a visually engaging composition. [47]

Not only do people differ in their experience of an environment, but because man is able to choose and even create his environment to some extent, it seems more likely that the cultural environment reflects the perceptual preferences of the majority of its inhabitants, rather than that the environment changes the "perceptual apparatus" as profoundly as the theories of "modern perception" claim. [48] Certainly the modern urban environment has side effects that are noxious for everyone (like air pollution), but everyone would want to avoid those, so they are not really at issue here.

On the one hand, rather complex and implausible theories (such as Benjamin's application of Freud's "stimulus shield") seem to spring from incredulity as to how anyone could even enjoy sensationalist entertainment (it is conceived, for example, as a "nervous shock"). On the other hand, cultural critics often all too readily assume that sensationalist devices automatically guarantee success with almost everyone.

Advertising is an instructive example in this regard. It is undoubtedly true that a strong stimulus, such as a huge poster of a scantily clad woman in garish colors, almost automatically attracts attention. But as advertising experts already knew at the time, this does not mean that everyone likes it, or necessarily reacts favorably to it (buys the advertised product, returns for another show, etc.). [49] For example, a woman would be likely to react differently to such a poster than a man, even at the most basic level of attention.

Regarding cultural differences, there is reason to believe that London was more densely plastered with posters in the nineteenth century than Berlin

was in the twentieth. Benjamin describes the impact of the aesthetically innovative, but hardly obtrusive black-and-white poster for Wilkie Collins' 1860 sensation novel *The Woman in White* thus:

> Recall the origins of the modern poster. In 1861, the first lithographic poster suddenly appeared on walls here and there around London. It showed the back of a woman in white who was thickly wrapped in a shawl and who, in all haste, had just reached the top of a flight of stairs, where, her head half turned and a finger upon her lips, she is ever so slightly opening a heavy door to reveal the starry sky. In this way Wilkie Collins advertised his latest book, one of the greatest detective novels ever written, *The Woman in White*. Still colorless, the first drops of a shower of letters ran down the walls of houses (today it pours unremittingly, day and night, on the big cities) and was greeted like the plagues of Egypt. [50]

Contrast this with Charles M. Smith's paean on the poster from 1853:

> His [the billposter's] handiwork stares the public in the face, let them turn which way they will; and it is a sheer impossibility for a lad who has once learned the art of reading, to lose it in London, unless he be both wilfully blind and destitute of human curiosity. To thousands and tens of thousands, the placarded walls and hoardings of the city are the only school of instruction open to them, whence they obtain all the knowledge they possess of that section of the world and society which does not lie patent to their personal observation. It is thence they derive their estimate of the different celebrities – in commerce, in literature, and in art, of the time in which they live, and are enabled to become in some measure acquainted with the progress of the age. Perhaps few men, even among the best educated, could be found who would willingly let drop the knowledge they have gained, although without intending it, from this gratuitous source. [51]

Furthermore, Smith writes that "[t]he age has grown wondrously pictorial during the reign of her present Majesty," and goes on to describe the rich visual environment of London, including its colorful advertising, quite favorably. [52]

Significantly, cinema posters were often singled out in Germany as the most offensive example of public advertising, the reason being their sensationalism. [53] Because cinema tried to attract patrons with advertising, it made existing taste differences publicly visible to an unprecedented extent. In 1914, Herbert Tannenbaum, who wrote the first German book-length treatise on the aesthetics of cinema, described the differences well, and with unusual sympathy for what German industry jargon called posters in the "English style":

> There are English posters that are absolutely gripping in their effect. For example, a while ago, there was a giant poster that showed a gang of criminals, standing on a wagon that is racing through the countryside at gallop tempo. A man is tied to the back of the wagon, drawn over hill and dale, and he is just about to cut the rope with a knife that he is holding between his teeth. Hardly a likeable concept, and its execution was rather crude as well. But how full of life this poster was! One could feel the tempo of the wagon, one was excited by the landscape with its bent trees and wildly stirred up dust, and one was in suspense about the attempt of the man to save his life. Even though it was awkward in its graphic technique, the poster was full of cinematic tempo. Imagine how this scene would look on a poster in the modern German style: very beautiful, very tasteful, but cold, frozen, stiff, without gripping intensity, without adventurousness. The appeal of the exciting scene would be gone; it would only be ridiculously implausible. Such a poster would have nothing to do with cinema. [54]

Not only was advertising subject to strict laws in Germany, but German advertisers found that imitating the Anglo-American style of advertising was not successful in their own country. [55] Even if one attributes such differences to differing speeds of modernization, I believe that it is important to remember that the perceptions of German theorists were also culturally specific to some extent and hence not necessarily representative of experience elsewhere.

Another common misconception of contemporary critics of sensationalism was that it was essentially associated with "low culture." By implication, educated, morally upstanding and critical audiences could not

possibly enjoy sensationalism, whereas “common people” usually did. Consequently, avant-garde artists were often accused of sensationalism in their day. For example, Thomas S. Baynes wrote on the “decadent” poet Algernon Charles Swinburne in 1871:

> He is the poet of what is known as the sensational school of literature. This school has long had its novelists and playwrights, its critics and journalists, and it now has its poet.… He agrees with the sensationalist in the fundamental point which gives the school its name – in appealing not to the intellect and the moral reason, not to the imagination and the affections, but to the senses and the appetites.… Of these experiences the painful are the more memorable and impressive. And as the object of the sensational writer is to produce the strongest effect, he naturally tends not only towards the physical, but towards what is extreme, revolting, and even horrible in our physical experience. Hence the accumulation of violent outrages and unnatural crimes that crowd the pages of the more characteristic novels of this class, and hence, too, the marked prominence which sensual pains as well as pleasures have in Mr. Swinburne’s poetry. [56]

Such accusations were intended as insults, of course, but artists who had an actual affinity with popular culture may even have regarded them as compliments. Hence I would argue that it was sensationalism, not in a pejorative sense, but in the sense of intense sensual experience, that was at the core of early cinema’s fascination for the avant-garde. [57] In 1913, for example, surrealist author Walter Serner described cinema thus:

> [Cinema is n]ot a harmless type of pleasure, for which mere movement or color or both is everything, but a terrible type of lust, no less powerful than the deepest type, which makes the blood rush feverishly, until that unfathomably strong excitement rushes through the flesh that is common to all lust.… It was the excitement of an adventurous tiger hunt, a mad ride over the mountains, a death-defying drive in an automobile, a breathtaking chase of a criminal, bleeding from a gun-shot wound, over the dizzying rooftops of New York, the sinister suburbs with their misery, sickness and crime, and the whole gruesome detective-romance with murder and fighting … and it was all the bloody, burning images of fire

> and death. All eyes could finally feast on atrocities and horror after long deprivation. It was a type of looking that had such tempo and life that it was lustful. [58]

As Garncarz points out in his discussion of the concept of the "cinema of attractions" (in this volume) avant-garde art often "shocked" in order to criticize (*épater le bourgeois*), but early cinema sought primarily to entertain. Hence, the affinity between them is a truly aesthetic one in the sense of sensual experience rather than meaning. Nonetheless, this affinity is important, because it reveals that the comparison between modern media and traffic noise by cultural critics is based on idealist and conservative aesthetic values, just as the criticism of avant-garde art was. [59] Significantly, in Germany, avant-garde artists were often accused of employing "cinematic effects" as a synonym for "sensationalism." [60]

Cine-sensationalism

As a perceptually rich medium, film had a great potential for sensationalism. In the already quite competitive entertainment landscape around 1900, the principle "more is more" initially must have seemed like a promising strategy to showmen. The typical contexts of film exhibition (rural fairgrounds as well as urban entertainment districts – sometimes of the disreputable kind), the elaborately decorated and brightly lit buildings, the loud organ and gramophone music, the graphic posters, and last but not least the films themselves (their form as well as content) together provided a very intense sensual experience. Gunning mentions "sensations" as one of the defining characteristics of the "cinema of attractions," [61] but this tendency toward sensationalism continued well into the period of permanent cinemas and longer narrative films, because as Singer has argued, longer, more complex narrative could even heighten sensationalism by adding suspense to spectacle. [62] Audiences responded very favorably to the sensationalism of early cinema, but not universally so. Hence, I believe that in the long run, cinema expanded its audience by increasingly differentiating its venues and films for different tastes.

In the beginning, fun fairs and variety theaters were the dominant exhibition contexts for films (see Garncarz, Chapter 17 in this volume). These entertainment sectors were transnational and highly sensationalist. Oskar Panizza's 1890 short story *Das Wachsfigurenkabinett* ("The Wax Museum") describes a passion play performed with talking waxworks at a fair in Germany. It is a marvelously ironic portrayal of the sensationalism of fairground entertainment shortly before the arrival of cinema. The first-person narrator has the following conversation with the owner of the show:

> "You seem to speculate on the nerves of your audience!… Were there any accidents during the last number [of Christ carrying the cross]?" – "Some get their epileptic seizures, but in England they go much further!" – "?" – "English waxworks are much coarser and completely unashamed. They beat on tables and make fists as if they wanted to box. I saw an English Christ that sweat wonderful blood. And the troupe that sold us our St. James in the Scottish costume performed a number before the crucifixion in which Judas hangs himself in an orchard on a withered tree. The sovereigns fly then, I can tell you that, and the rope is cut into 10 to 15 pieces! For a lock of Christ's hair, 5 pounds are offered!" – "I take it that in Germany all that is forbidden?" – "Alas, the officials don't have any sympathy for these things whatsoever. Everything is still very primitive in our country. Only our heads are better." [63]

The story ends with a brawl when a woman jumps onto the stage because she wants to save "Christ" from crucifixion (very similar to rube characters in early films). [64]

A look at the genre categories used in Robert W. Paul's 1903 catalogue illustrates what kinds of films were shown in these settings: "songs with animated illustrations; novel trick and effect films; new comic films; new sensational scenes; sports; conjuring, acrobatic and stage performances by well-known artists; original trick and effect subjects; railway, shipping and marine subjects; sensational films; dramatic scenes; fire scenes; comic pictures; pictures of the Transvaal War; reproductions of incidents of the Boer War; royalty and historical subjects; Egyptian, Spanish, Turkish, Scandinavian, Holy Land and other foreign films." [65] Not only does almost every genre present something sensational, the sensational is a default

category, because the medium as such presented itself as the sensation among sensations on fairgrounds and in variety theaters. Add to that French and Austrian erotic films, which were deemed suitable only for adult, sometimes even purely male audiences (called “smoking concert films” in Britain and *Herrenabende* in Germany), [66] and religious films like passion plays, which were highly controversial (in Germany, they were eventually forbidden altogether). [67] That extremely diverse subjects were often programmed together is likely to have heightened the effect.

Regarding longer narrative films, which were made in increasing numbers in connection with the spread of permanent cinemas around 1910, the topics of American silent film cycles may give some indication of what was typical and particularly successful in the United States between 1900 and 1929: “abandoned spouse; alcoholism; amnesia; avenging spouse; backstage; battered women; biographies; black hand; burglary; capital punishment; capital vs. labor; childbirth; circumstantial evidence; circus; city vs. country; class distinction; courtroom; cross dressing; detectives; divorce; drugs; eugenics; gangs and gangsters; Greenwich Village; jungle; mythical kingdoms; patriotism; political corruption; prejudice; prostitution; red scare; seduction and abandonment; slums; vampires; white slavery; women’s rights.” [68] Whether adapted from history, fiction, or the daily press, the subject matter was obviously as sensationalist as it could be. Consequently, the concern of contemporary critics regarding the sensationalism of the new medium did not end with the “cinema of attractions.” On the contrary, it even seems to have surged with awareness of the growing spread and popularity of cinemagoing in connection with permanent cinemas. [69]

Not even European “art films,” which are commonly regarded as a strategy of making cinema more respectable, [70] were exempt from sensationalism. The works chosen for adaptations typically provided ample material for visual spectacle as well as narratives filled with sex and crime. Accordingly, responses were mixed. A German reviewer of a special screening of the French *film d’art Les Misérables* (SCAGL/Pathé, 1912), for example, complained that the film made Victor Hugo’s novel seem like a sensation novel, because it focused on the sentimental and exciting story

while eliminating description and psychological motivation. [71] Another reviewer (not of the same occasion, but more generally) shared this perception, but evidently enjoyed the experience, and thus arrived at the opposite conclusion, which he pithily and frankly summarized as: “Only the most gripping scenes were taken from Victor Hugo’s works, and in this manner his multi-volume novels that put one to sleep were given new life.” [72]

Hence, again, cultural differences emerge upon closer examination. Scholars have justly pointed out that early cinema drew heavily upon other media, from magic lantern shows and popular fiction to stage melodramas (an instance of what Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin have termed “remediation”). [73] But the sources chosen tended to be sensationalist to an extent that had hardly any precedent in Germany. Hence reactions of German cultural critics to early cinema were particularly vehement. For example, as Ulrike Dulinski has shown, the sensationalist boulevard press arrived much later in Germany, and it was much “tamer” than its counterparts in other countries. [74] Furthermore, there was nothing comparable to French and Anglo-American sensational melodrama on German stages. [75] Ernst Leopold Stahl, the author of a history of British theater published in 1914, wrote on the melodrama: “The melodrama knows and accepts only one purpose: to provide sensational entertainment at any cost – the same purpose as the sensation novel has, which is read in England by young and old, by the lower as well as the upper classes.… No means are too base for the unscrupulous dramatists of these gruesome plays, as long as they serve one purpose: to create suspense.” [76]

Significantly, Stahl called the melodrama a “cinema drama with accompanying text.” [77] Kurt Tucholsky, after a special screening of films by the Berlin police in 1913, wrote a passionate article advocating the censorship of cinema, despite the fact that he was against it for other arts and was highly critical of German conservatism in general. One of the examples that he singled out was the typical suspense scene of a last-minute rescue from a chain saw that had been a standard of Anglo-American

sensational melodrama long before cinema (which he did not seem to recognize). [78]

The censorship that came to be instated for cinema in Germany was extremely strict. [79] Munich, paradoxically a center of avant-garde art, but also one of the most conservative German cities, even went so far as to explicitly censor sensationalism: “Depictions that offend state institutions, public order, religion, morals and decency are to be rejected. Sensational and trashy films are also to be regarded as morally offensive.” [80] This in effect institutionalized aesthetic censorship of cinema, even though it was highly controversial for other arts. In Germany, cinema censorship was not simply imposed from above; it had wide public support. [81] In 1912, a rare German dissenter described the differences of attitudes toward censorship in Britain and Germany with an anecdote:

> England is indeed the country in which everyone may become happy in his own fashion.… London cinema has something that German cinema lacks: freedom from censorship. In Germany, hardly any films are shown that have not passed censorship. In England there is a much more powerful censor: the audience itself. I have personally experienced a delightful case of such voluntary censorship by the cinema audience. The little episode took place in a working-class cinema. It was during a screening of the Pathé film *Notre Dame de Paris* [*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, 1911]. There is a nerve-wracking torture scene in this film; I do not know whether it was passed by the German censors. In London it was shown in its entirety. A common woman and her son were sitting next to me. When the torture scene began, of course I immediately thought of all the arguments brought forth in Germany against allowing children to attend the cinema. I asked myself how this gruesome scene would affect the mind of a child. But lo and behold! When the mother saw that a nerve-wracking sensation was coming, she said to the boy, “Johnnie, turn around! This is nothing for you!” And the little boy actually did turn around and stayed that way until his mother said, “Alright now, here’s something for you again!” [82]

Britain also introduced censorship eventually, but it was more liberal on average. [83]

Rather than as the cause of change, I would interpret censorship merely as the institutionalization of widely shared values and preferences. The majority of the German audience shunned sensationalism, and German film producers increasingly responded to these preferences. In Altenloh's study, German cinemagoers usually preferred domestic films [84] – only those who particularly enjoyed sensationalism turned to foreign films, especially Anglo-American productions, i.e., detective films and westerns. [85] Altenloh describes cinemas that particularly catered to sensationalism thus: "[Suburban cinemas] offer everything that those seeking horror and sensationalism could possibly want, and appeal to the type of person vilified in many quarters as pernicious and lacking in taste. Loud, garish posters with sensational titles, often specially altered to appeal to a particularly unshockable audience, cover entire facades. Just how low the level is and what kind of visitor is expected is best summed up by the following notice in one of the auditoria: 'Wrecking of chairs and benches is prohibited'." [86]

In Altenloh's study, this "type of person" turns out to be predominantly young and male (and lower class, but whether this is significant is not quite clear, because Altenloh's sample is predominantly working class). It is the same audience segment that is catered to today with action, horror, and science fiction films – as well as video games, which have raised much the same debates anew. Media have certainly developed along with modernization, but the "history of vision" thesis is not sufficient to explain such similarities in preferences over time, nor differences between audience segments of the same period.

Conclusion

To conclude, I hope to have shown that the concept of sensationalism is very valuable for the study of early cinema, including and beyond the "cinema of attractions." Scholars of early cinema have worked hard to show

that the new medium was commercially very successful and aesthetically much more sophisticated than it was given credit for. Thus, I hope that it will not be misunderstood as a step backward to reexamine discourses that regarded early cinema as "sensationalist" simply because this term was (and is) often used in a highly pejorative sense. What I find most fascinating and fruitful about the concept of sensationalism is how there converge around it discourses and studies that use psychophysiology to explain aesthetic preferences, including their differences. According to current psychological knowledge, perceptual differences do not begin at the level of meaning and ideology, but already at the level of sensual experience, which, contrary to the "history of vision" thesis, is only partly malleable by culture. A new look at past discourses on media sensationalism is thus instructive for current and possibly even future discourses.

Notes

1 Walther Conradt, *Kirche und Kinematograph: Eine Frage von Pastor Walther Conradt* (Berlin: Walther, 1910), 33. Translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

2 My thanks to Joseph Garncarz, Frank Kessler, Andreas Killen, and Daniel Müller, as well as the reviewers, for their comments.

3 See Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Tom Gunning, "Modernity and Cinema: A Culture of Shocks and Flows," in *Cinema and Modernity*, ed. Murray Pomerance (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 297–315; David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

4 See Karl Marx, "Private Property and Communism," in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 3 rd manuscript, trans. and ed. Martin Milligan (1956; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover, 2011).

5 For an extensive discussion of the terms "modernity," "modernization," etc. see Singer, *Melodrama*, especially chap. 1, "Meanings of Modernity."

6 As an example, see Daniel Fritsch, *Georg Simmel im Kino: Die Soziologie des frühen Films und das Abenteuer der Moderne* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009); as well as Jan-Christopher Horak's review of the book,

“Sammelrezension: Früher Film,” *Medienwissenschaft: Rezensionen* 3 (2010): 370–3.

7 Noël Carroll, “Modernity and the Plasticity of Perception,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59, no. 1 (2001): 11–17.

8 Frank Kessler, “Viewing Change, Changing Views: The ‘History of Vision’-Debate,” in *Film 1900: Technology, Perception, Culture*, eds. Annemone Ligensa and Klaus Kreimeier (New Barnet: Libbey, 2009), 23–36.

9 Tom Gunning, “The Horror of Opacity: The Melodrama of Sensation in the Plays of André de Lorde,” in *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, eds. Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill (London: BFi, 1994), 52.

10 “Sensationalism” in philosophy (also “sensationism,” in German *Sensualismus*), i.e., the view that all knowledge derives from the senses, is not my topic here, but it is useful to consider the possibility that sensationist epistemology has some affinity with “sensationalist” aesthetics (and hence, by extension, with media sensationalism). For example, Mark Harrison regards both objectivity and sensationalism in journalism as based in empiricism, but the latter as having a more pessimistic view of human nature (“Sensationalism, Objectivity and Reform in Turn-of-the-Century America,” in *Turning the Century: Essays in Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. Carol A. Stabile [Boulder: Westview, 2000], 55–74).

11 *Nordisk familjebok: Konversationslexikon och Realencyklopedi*, vol. 25, *Sekt-Slöjski*fl*ing*, 2nd ed. (Stockholm: Nordisk Familjeboks Förl., 1904–26 [1917]), 101–2. I thank Patrick Vonderau for translating the Swedish text into German, which I then translated into English. For a definition (and examples of usage) in English, see the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v.: “sensation 3. An excited or violent feeling. a. An exciting experience; a strong emotion (e.g. of terror, hope, curiosity, etc.) aroused by some particular occurrence or situation. Also, in generalized use, the production of violent emotion as an aim in works of literature or art. b. A condition of excited feeling produced in a community by some occurrence; a strong impression (e.g. of horror, admiration, surprise, etc.) produced in an audience or body of spectators, and manifested by their demeanour. c. An event or a person that ‘creates a sensation’.”

12 Christoph Türcke, in his philosophical (but highly speculative and judgmental) book on sensationalism, makes much of this shift of meaning. He refers to several countries without realizing, it appears, that German was an exception in this regard (*Erregte Gesellschaft: Philosophie der Sensation* [Munich: Beck, 2002]).

13 Instead of investigating the contemporary origins of the term, Shelley Streeby, in her otherwise excellent study of the American sensation novel, rather circularly refers to the somewhat later, but more extensively researched phenomenon of the British sensation novel, as well as to Tom Gunning. See Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). On the British sensation novel of the 1860s, see also Winifred Hughes, "The Sensation Novel," in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, eds. Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 260–78.

14 "Sensation Literature," *Literary Budget* 1 (November 1, 1861): 15.

15 Sergei Eisenstein, "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today" [1944], in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. Jay Layda (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), 195–256.

16 Charles Dickens, "Not a New 'Sensation'," *All the Year Round* (July 25, 1863): 517.

17 On sensationalism in the press see Mitchell Stephens, *The History of News*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 100–3.

18 Kaspar von Stieler, *Zeitungs Lust und Nutz*, ed. Gert Hagelweide (1695; repr., Bremen: Schünemann, 1969).

19 Note that *Sensationsroman* and *Schundroman* (*Schund* = trash) were often used interchangeably in German, which indicates that such literature was regarded with much more disdain than the sensation novel in England. I would even argue that sensationalism hardly existed in books, but only in pamphlet novels, which were often translations or imitations of Anglo-American models. Unfortunately, there is very little research on German sensational literature.

20 Ernst Schultze, *Der Kinematograph als Bildungsmittel: Eine kulturpolitische Untersuchung* (Halle an der Saale: Buchhandlung des Weisenhauses, 1911), 75.

21 See Walter Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture*, new ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

22 On those concepts, see Sander Gilman and Edward J. Chamberlin, eds., *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

23 Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (1913; repr., London: Grant Richards, 1922), 30.

24 On the history of criticism of popular culture more generally, see Patrick Brantlinger, *Bread and Circuses: Theories of Mass Culture as Social Decay* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

25 On neurasthenia in general, see Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Roy Porter, eds., *Cultures of Neurasthenia: From Beard to the First World War* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001).

26 See Christopher D. Green, Marlene Shore, and Thomas Teo, eds., *The Transformation of Psychology: Influences of 19th-Century Philosophy, Technology, and Natural Science* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001).

27 See Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" [1903], in *Simmel On Culture: Selected Writings*, eds. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1997), 174–86.

28 See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," trans. Harry Zohn and Edmund Jephcott, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 4, *1938–1940*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003), 251–83; and *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999).

29 As in Fritsch, *Georg Simmel im Kino*. A highly commendable exception is Ben Singer (in *Melodrama*), who has drawn on current physiological psychology to examine some of these claims.

30 Ben Singer has convincingly shown that what contemporaries called overstimulation, exhaustion etc. can be usefully connected with research on what was somewhat later termed "stress." See Singer, *Melodrama*, esp. 118–26.

31 Translation quoted from Sigmund Freud, "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness" [1908], *Collected Papers*, vol. 2 (New York: Basic Books, 1959), 79.

32 Ibid., 76–99.

33 Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 281.

34 For an English translation of excerpts from the German dissertation, see Emilie Altenloh, "A Sociology of the Cinema: The Audience" [1914], *Screen* 42, no. 3 (2001): 249–93.

35 For contemporary studies on the leisure activities of German workers, see Klaus Saul, Jens Flemming, Dirk Stegmann, and Peter-Christian Witt, eds., *Arbeiterfamilien im Kaiserreich: Materialien zur Sozialgeschichte in Deutschland 1871–1914* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1982).

36 That the increase in time and money was a necessary condition for commercial leisure activities (such as cinemagoing) has often been pointed out. See Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 1978); and Lynn Abrams, *Workers' Culture in Imperial Germany: Leisure and Recreation in the Rhineland and Westphalia* (London: Routledge, 1992).

37 See Harry Campbell, "The Craving for Stimulants," *The Lancet* (October 21, 1899): 1091–4.

38 Ben Singer also makes use of this concept. See Singer, *Melodrama*, esp. 112–20.

39 Maud Stanley, *Work About the Five Dials* (London: Macmillan, 1878), 21–2.

40 Quoted in Gary D. Stark, "Pornography, Society, and the Law in Imperial Germany," *Central European History* 14, no. 3 (1981): 209.

41 Altenloh, "A Sociology," 274.

42 Dietrich Mühlberg, *Arbeiterleben um 1900* (Berlin: Dietz, 1983), 171.

43 Charles M. Smith, *The Little World of London; or, Pictures in Little of London Life* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue, 1857), 1–2.

44 For an overview of this research, see Mary Beth Oliver, Jinhee Kim, and Meghan S. Sanders, "Personality," in *Psychology of Entertainment*, eds. Jennings Bryant and Peter Vorderer (Mahwah: Erlbaum, 2006), 329–43.

45 Altenloh, “A Sociology,” 260.

46 *Provinzialzeitung* [Bremerhaven], November 29, 1896, translation quoted from Kessler, “Viewing Change,” 31–2.

47 Kessler, “Viewing Change,” 32.

48 Ben Singer uses the concept of “neuroplasticity” to argue that some profound perceptual changes might be possible (see *Melodrama*). But in a narrow sense, neuroplasticity is limited to certain areas and, consequently, functions of the brain, and in a wider sense, higher cognition and hence all learning involves neuronal change to some extent. Hence the concept does not really help to resolve the debate. Long-term change is very difficult to research empirically, of course.

49 On advertising in Germany around 1900, see Christiane Lamberty, *Reklame in Deutschland 1890–1914: Wahrnehmung, Professionalisierung und Kritik der Wirtschaftswerbung* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2000).

50 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 876.

51 Charles M. Smith, *Curiosities of London Life: or, Phases, Physiological and Social, of the Great Metropolis* (1853; repr., London: Routledge, 1972), 122.

52 Smith, *Little World*, 233.

53 See for example “Das Kientopp-Plakat,” *Mitteilungen des Vereins deutscher Reklamefachleute*, 28 (1912): 29.

54 Herbert Tannenbaum, “Kino, Plakat und Kinoplakat,” *Bild und Film* 4, no. 9 (1914–15): 177.

55 See Lamberty, *Reklame*, 477–90 and 102.

56 Thomas S. Baynes, “Swinburne’s Poems,” *Edinburgh Review* 134 (July 1871): 93–4.

57 On British modernists and cinema see Laura Marcus, *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For Germany, see Heinz-B. Heller, *Literarische Intelligenz und Film: Zu Veränderungen der ästhetischen Theorie und Praxis unter dem Eindruck des Films 1910–1930 in Deutschland* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1985).

58 Walter Serner, “Kino und Schaulust,” *Schaubühne* 9, no. 34 (1913): 807.

59 See for example Jörg Schweinitz's analysis of Hugo Münsterberg, one of the first German academics who was willing to engage seriously with cinema at all, as a (Neo-)Kantian ("The Aesthetic Idealist as Efficiency Engineer: Hugo Münsterberg's Theories of Perception, Psychotechnics, and Cinema," in Ligensa and Kreimeier, *Film 1900*, 77–86).

60 See Broder Christiansen, *Philosophie der Kunst* (Hanau: Clauss & Feddersen, 1909).

61 See Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, nos. 3–4 (1986): 63–70.

62 See Singer, *Melodrama*.

63 Oskar Panizza, "Das Wachsfigurenkabinett," in *Dämmerungsstücke: Vier Erzählungen* (Leipzig: Friedrich, 1890).

64 On the rube, see Thomas Elsaesser, "Archaeologies of Interactivity: Early Cinema, Narrative and Spectatorship," in Ligensa and Kreimeier, *Film 1900*, 9–22.

65 Quoted from Églantine Monsaingeon, " Les genres cinématographiques dans le cinéma des premiers temps," in *La nascita dei generi cinematografici/The Birth of Film Genres* , eds. Leonardo Quaresima, Alessandra Raengo, and Laura Vichi (Udine: Forum, 1999), 141.

66 On "smoking concert films" in Britain, see Simon Brown, "Early Cinema and the Smoking Concert Film," *Journal of Early Popular Visual Culture* 3, no. 2 (2005): 165–78. On erotic films in Germany, see Christian Junklewitz, "Erotik im frühen Kino: Ästhetik und kulturelle Praxis" (master's thesis, University of Cologne, 2004).

67 On religion in early cinema, see Roland Cosandey, André Gaudreault, and Tom Gunning, eds., *Une invention du diable? Cinéma des premiers temps et religion/An Invention of the Devil? Early Cinema and Religion* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1992). Unfortunately, Germany is not included in the case studies.

68 These topics were compiled by Larry Langman, *American Film Cycles: The Silent Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998).

69 For American examples, see Singer, *Melodrama*.

70 On the so-called "transitional phase," i.e., the turn to longer narrative films, see Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp, eds., *American Cinema's*

Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

71 See F. W., "Die Entwicklung zum Kino," *Tsingtauer Neueste Nachrichten* (February 1, 1913).

72 5 P. Browe, "Lichtspieltheater," *Stimmen aus Maria Laach* 87 (1914): 173–87.

73 See Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

74 Ulrike Dulinski, *Sensationsjournalismus in Deutschland* (Konstanz: UVK, 2003).

75 As is well known, Peter Brooks has explained the emergence of what he has termed the "melodramatic imagination" with modernization in *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). Film scholars have extended this idea to cinema. It seems to me that this entails or may even have created the belief that the genre and its characteristics are "universal."

76 Ernst Leopold Stahl, *Das englische Theater im 19. Jahrhundert: Seine Bühnenkunst und Literatur* (Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1914), 144.

77 Ibid., 142.

78 See Kurt Tucholsky, "Verbotene Films," *Schaubühne* 9, no. 40 (1913): 949–53.

79 On German censorship of early cinema, see Gabriele Kilchenstein, *Frühe Filmzensur in Deutschland: Eine vergleichende Studie zur Prüfungspraxis in Berlin und München (1906– 1914)* (Munich: Diskurs Film, 1997).

80 Ibid., 166.

81 See the survey quoted in ibid., 200, fn. 702.

82 "Der Kinematograph in London: Eindrücke eines Deutschen," *Bild und Film* 1, nos. 3–4 (1912): 67–9.

83 This would probably surprise those who have written about British film censorship, such as James C. Robertson, *The British Board of Film Censors: Film Censorship in Britain, 1896–1950* (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

84 Altenloh, “A Sociology,” 259.
85 Ibid., 264.
86 Ibid., 254–5.

10

From Craft to Industry

Series and Serial Production Discourses and Practices in France[1]

Laurent Le Forestier

The “new film history” that appeared in the wake of the Brighton Congress in 1978 has often turned its defiance of classical historiography (epitomized in France by figures such as Georges Sadoul and Jean Mitry) into an epistemological principle. And yet these researchers of a bygone era, who often had an empirical familiarity with early cinema as good as our own (the difference being in the way they observed their object of study), had intuitions about this period of film history whose insightfulness can at times be striking.[2] This seems to me to be true of the little-cited Swiss historian Peter Bächlin when he wrote, in the introduction to his book *Der Film als Ware*: “Film is a branch of the economy without any tradition. It developed autonomously at times and at others by borrowing its structure from other sectors. In a very short period of time this industry came to employ practically every form of capitalism that preceded it, from individual enterprise to trusts. The very high risk factor associated with it and the measures taken to reduce or eliminate this risk have given its production, distribution, and exhibition quite peculiar qualities.”[3]

Today we would undoubtedly reproach such an assertion’s radical econocentrism, which appears to liken the making of kinematographic scenes[4] to the production of any everyday consumer good. But this objection takes little note of the heuristic value of such a position, which

reminds us that historical thinking about film during this period (the 1940s), in writing both in a scholarly vein (Bächlin, Sadoul, etc.) and in memoirs (in 1940 Charles Pathé, writing about his activities in the first decade of the century, spoke of the "rational production of an industry"),[5] endeavored above all to describe film as an economic activity. It is undoubtedly significant that those who knew early cinema, whether first- or second-hand, spoke of it in these terms, but it would be going too far to conclude from our reading of these "witnesses to history" that this is necessarily how we should speak of it today. Most importantly, Bächlin's remarks point up the need to examine the financial sources and business model of this activity which, with its need for substantial amounts of capital, could only develop (beyond its birth) in an industrial framework. On this point the only criticism we can make of Bächlin is the absence of evidence to back up his intuition. The present chapter, taking this observation as its starting point, aims precisely to provide a few indications of the dominance of industrial thinking in early cinema through the study of discourses on this new activity (the first part of Bächlin's assertion) and, second (corresponding to the latter part of his remarks quoted here), to formulate a few hypotheses concerning the manner in which these discourses are visible in some of the ways in which kinematographic scenes were made. Here I will propose that the concept "series" can play the role of structuring motif, because it refers to operations whose nature was both economic ("serial" production) and aesthetic (series of scenes, themselves constructed out of series of tableaux).

The "Craft" Era

Until now, the discourses *of* early cinema have been little studied. The few notable exceptions are often scattered about more general discussions. This is the case, for example, for André Gaudreault's remarks on the famous 1907 article by Georges Méliès, "Kinematographic Views."[6] The article's author and its date of publication are indicative of the way in which it is out of step with film practices of the day. The model for crafting[7] kinematographic scenes developed by Méliès was based on the principle

that “the author must know how to work out everything on paper by himself. As a result, he must be the author, metteur en scène, set designer, and often an actor if he wants to obtain a unified whole.”[8] This method was practically no longer practiced in France at the time, and Méliès’s own output had slowed considerably and seemed to encounter greater difficulty attracting an audience. In 1907, kinematography was no longer the product of a craft process, as Méliès still described it.[9] The choice of this term merits attention. Even in Méliès’s day the French term he used, *confection*, was uncommon, as this dictionary entry from a half-century earlier makes clear: “this word is little used in everyday language. In its most ordinary sense, it is used in business and production contexts to speak of something being crafted [*entreprendre la confection* or *confectionner*], of objects that are made or fabricated by means of a mechanical art.”[10] The term craft thus clearly refers to a kind of artisanship (an artisan is, precisely, defined by this dictionary as “someone who exercises a mechanical art,”[11] wherein “mechanical” is understood in the “craft” sense discussed in note 7 above) and is undoubtedly more revealing of Méliès’s attitude toward his own work than it is of his view of film manufacturers of the day. At the same time, Méliès was not wrong to extrapolate from his own work, because his films dominated the first decade of French cinema. In fact the Pathé company made its first films according to the same principle: beginning in 1899 it made use of independent camera operators to record pictures it then marketed. The company’s financial records show that it supplied these operators with raw stock and paid them an honorarium that included their expenses and professional fees. These operators could thus be likened to artisans conceiving an “object fabricated by means of a mechanical art” (an animated picture corresponds entirely to this definition) and selling it to a client. The only difference between this method and Méliès’s model is the fact that Méliès’s clientele was made up of stall keepers while the camera operators negotiated with a company which then sold their “articles.” This cinematic artisanship corresponds precisely to what Janet Staiger has described as the “cameraman system of production”: “In general, cameramen … would select the subject matter and stage it as necessary by manipulating setting, lighting, and people; they would select options from

available technological and photographic possibilities (type of camera, raw stock, and lens, framing and movement of camera, etc.), photograph the scene, develop and edit it."[12]

This mode of production, which was used most often to make natural views out of doors as in the Lumière model, when the camera operator required no assistance to shoot the scene, was employed by Pathé at a time when fiction films already dominated its output. The company thus used the only business and economic system that existed in nascent kinematography practices at the time, even as it modeled itself on artisanship, the only existing commercial form suited to a company of its small size. Nevertheless, even in its very first years Pathé cannot be seen as fully practicing artisanal methods, because although it worked with artisans it took on an intermediary role, one typical of a period in which it was still hesitating (as was Gaumont) between the sale of film equipment and making scenes. The company's later transformation indicates a change of strategy, or rather a settling upon a choice: little by little, making scenes became its preeminent activity, even though the making and marketing of equipment remained a major part of its business.

The Transition to Another System

This mode of production seems to have continued until at least early 1901, but it clearly did not apply to the company as it stood at the time of Méliès's comments. This is seen in Pathé's 1907 catalogues, which reveal a discourse no longer a part of the semantic field developed by Méliès. Moreover, it was undoubtedly not by chance that, beginning in 1906, Pathé opened its brochures with a "history of kinematography"[13] whose goal was explicitly to point up a break with its beginnings. Symptomatically, the expression *projections animées* (animated screenings), the sole manner of defining the new entertainment "some ten years ago," is no longer present in the rest of the text, which stands out for its insistence on the way the company had contributed to the emergence of another kind of kinematography: "The Pathé brothers, convinced that a complete transformation of itinerant exhibitions must result from this discovery,

resolved to industrialize this invention, whose possible applications, in their view, were considerable." The text had begun to use a new semantic field around the concept "industry," one replete with every virtue, because "in kinematography, foreign production is outpaced by French production." Most importantly, it intended to prove this assertion by explaining in detail the nature of this industrialization: "Driven by the sort of faith that is necessary to the success of any enterprise, the Pathé brothers trained personnel, created a physical plant, and brought together every skill in this special line of business, continuing without respite to seek out the best and leading them to occupy the highest rung the world over in terms of both the quality and the quantity of their kinematographic scenes." Beyond the marketing hype, the process described contains a large grain of truth: to make its kinematographic scenes, the company undeniably trained its own personnel (in particular its camera operators, who were generally taken on without experience), designed special equipment (such as the camera used on all the company's shoots and which was called, symbolically, the Industriel Pathé[14] (known in English as the Pathé Professional), and created hierarchical tasks on the film set, to the point of passing over to a different production system, one basically corresponding to what Janet Staiger describes as the "director system": "In this system of production, one individual staged the action and another person photographed it. Moreover, the director managed a set of workers including the craftsman cameraman."[15] In fact, because set designers were no longer paid by project but were placed on salary, the number of workers on a shoot grew. They were overseen by a *metteur en scène*, whose function was similar to that of a foreman in a factory. He was generally under the supervision of a manager (an administrative *directeur*, which is not the same as a film director or *metteur en scène*), in Pathé's case in the person of the production manager who supervised every aspect of the work, Ferdinand Zecca. In short, the business structure employed to film scenes, which was now a part of the company's activities, no longer resembled that of a workshop but rather that of a factory. This was a resemblance that the company's discourse made no bones about: "At the Pathé Frères factories in Vincennes and Joinville, the largest film works in the world employ nearly eight

hundred workers and produce more than forty kilometers of film daily, or more than two million photographic images per day."[16]

An Industrial Conception of Kinematography

It is thus apparent that Méliès's reference system was unable to describe Pathé's operations: their respective conceptions of kinematography were so unlike that each had different ambitions for the medium. Méliès's description of the work of the *metteur en scène* made of him a craftsman on the side of art, implicitly identifying quality as the essential criterion of his work, while Pathé subjected the *metteur en scène* to a criterion which quickly supplanted the notion of quality (in particular, but not only, in the company's internal discourses, such as its board of directors meetings): that of quantity – even as the quality of the films produced remained an important argument for the sale or rental of its films, as we saw in the quotation from the company's catalogue above. Commentators of the day understood this perfectly and, once this view had entered regular discourse, adopted a comparable rhetoric to describe, precisely, the role of the *metteur en scène*. Here is an example from 1912; the author is Émile Kress: "the *metteur en scène* retains in this art, which is almost an exact science, the privilege of making judicious choices and of managing what I would call the economy of the scene."[17] This description, in its attempt to reconcile the two directions in which the *metteur en scène*'s work was being pulled in a large scene-manufacturing company, is something of an oxymoron: on the one hand lies art, which catalogues often vaunted to highlight the particular interest of a scene, using a great variety of circumlocutions (such as a film's "sumptuous *mise en scène*");[18] and on the other the application of precise know-how, beyond the *metteur en scène*'s initiative and consisting, rather, of directives, as seen in the production logs (*fiches de fabrication*) of the major industrial manufacturers.[19] This was true to such an extent that Kress could employ an expression which only appears to be ambiguous and was perfectly suited to the mode of production of companies such as Pathé,

Gaumont, Éclipse, Éclair, etc.: the *metteur en scène* manages the "economy of the scene." While we must avoid both a metaphorical interpretation of this phrase (the way we would speak today of a film's "narrative economy") and an excessively narrow financial reading of it, the range of meanings covered by the word "economy" clearly suggests a degree of control and mastery which surpass the innate skills of a *metteur en scène*. Our nineteenth-century dictionary by Bescherelle cited above would tell us that economy can mean "order … in the management of a good" and "conduct regulated by the circumstances of time, place and persons."[20] Each of these definitions would be a good description of a highly industrial form of kinematography.

This definition of the role of the *metteur en scène* also expresses the fact that this singular view was not restricted to the discourse of film manufacturers. Indeed writing on film in France after 1906 illustrates the existence of a kind of econocentrism, although it may become less significant and dulled somewhat with the advent and generalization of the *film d'art* after 1908. It preserved enough of its force, however, to find its way into the work of Kress in 1912. We could even make the claim that it was undoubtedly during the years 1906–8 that the term "production" took hold, first within the boards of directors of large film publishing[21] concerns and then throughout the profession through trade journals. The general meaning it took on really only came with the Second Industrial Revolution and the founding, in France, of large-scale manufactories, "vast enterprises employing a great number of workers,"[22] in the words of Bescherelle's dictionary. Here the term *fabrication*, in French, becomes, if not obsolete, at least inappropriate. From "fabrication" to industrial production, what changes are the scale and numbers involved, on the level both of the personnel required and the quantities of "merchandise"[23] created. The major issue facing the principal film publishers (initially Pathé and Gaumont) from 1901 to 1906 was precisely that of how to convert their output to mass production.[24] This question also illustrates how goals became defined in financial terms, as this phrase uttered at a Pathé board of directors meeting a few years later confirms: "because the margin between the sale price and the cost of making films has decreased, we are obligated

to produce more to achieve the same results."[25] Taken out of context, this remark would reveal nothing of its origins in the film business; it conveys the great temptation to apply to film industrial strategies deriving from other activities. Such a phenomenon was quite logical when we consider that Pathé's board members all hailed from traditional industries, such as the Saint-Étienne coal pits.

The "Industrial" Discourse Becomes Generalized

In a sense, French film became an industry when the economic discourse framing it became a part of business strategies and when these strategies came to be seen as acceptable, or even normal, by commentators of the day who were not a part of these companies – to the point that this discourse, which was initially restricted to manufacturers, became public. And this is precisely what happened during this period. The trade journal *Ciné-Journal* provides a remarkable example of this, because it was born in 1908 (a by no means fortuitous date, because it corresponds to the transition to film rentals and permanent movie theaters) and positioned itself as the "weekly organ of the film industry." Logically enough, not a week went by that, in its columns, kinematography was not depicted as an industry, meaning as a homogeneous group of companies working in the same essentially economic direction, as the following quotation expresses quite explicitly: "This professional cohesion … can occur because there is no lack of good will and a business sense is shared by every representative of the industry."[26] The journal, which did not hesitate to attack the large film publishers, never did so in the name of an anti-industrial conception of kinematography but rather because of a difference of opinion on how the industry should be run. The same article expresses this clearly: it challenges both the position of Pathé, which had refused to participate in the congress planned by the Chambre syndicale des fabricants et négociants de Cinématographes (the association of filmmakers and merchants, which at that time still included true craftsmen such as Méliès), and the "industrial

ideas of Mr. Charles Pathé,"[27] not because they are industrial but precisely because they threaten the "professional cohesion" of which it speaks.

There seems to have been consensus that kinematography was an industry. The discourse to this effect can be found in professional circles, the work of journalists in the field, and amongst people outside the field. Thus when the editor of the magazine *L'Illustration* was invited to discover the mysteries of the film world, he began his article by placing the phenomenon in a context whose obviousness could not be denied: "Time has passed, for kinematography, with a speed suited to it. An entire industry, formidable and powerfully organized and whose annual products are worth millions of francs, has been born out of the Lumière brothers' invention."[28] This was also the view of the various figures in the legal milieu who were often called upon in these years to work on the numerous legal proceedings around kinematography. Their comments are of particular interest here because, in order to plead their cases using quite precise arguments, they systematically employed definitions. This was the case with the French term *éditeur* (publisher), which was adopted to describe the activities of large companies such as Pathé and Gaumont: the law viewed an *éditeur* as "someone who takes on the publication expenses [of a film] and carries out the work involved in selling and distributing the copies produced" and *édition* (publishing) as "the industrial multiplication of a kinematographic work."[29] While this definition, apart from its borrowed terms, highlights the affinities between the world of kinematography and that of literature, it ventures to do so only on the basis of a complete harmony of activities – the "industrial multiplication of a work" of which it speaks. For it is uncertain whether this analogy could satisfy the champions of this discourse were it taken to its logical conclusion. In fact Edmond Benoit-Lévy remarked opportunely in 1907 that "film does not constitute an ordinary sort of merchandise, but a literary and artistic property."[30] This quotation, at the same time as it attempts to get out from under the industrial discourse on kinematography, is also indicative of the fact that its author is speaking from this same central and undeniable position, that of industrial cinema. In particular, he is attempting to draw a boundary around this discourse, one that seems appropriate to him with respect to the film publishers' business

structure but misplaced when it comes to speaking of the reality of what is produced: an object which was not the product of a “mechanical art,” in the “craft” sense described above, which could legitimately be encompassed by this discourse, but which was literary and artistic in nature. In other words, for Benoit-Lévy, kinematographic scenes were not goods that could be produced serially, en masse, like products in other industrial sectors:[31] the unique quality of each scene seemed to range it naturally alongside works of art. In fact we can only conclude from this quick study of discourses that the concept of serial production was seemingly absent from them, as if, precisely, there was no question of applying to the conception of kinematographic scenes a process which would encumber this activity to the point of definitively depriving it of any artistic quality.

Putting Industrial Discourse into Practice

And yet Benoit-Lévy’s remarks, to a large extent, were nothing more than pious hopes. For while the term “series,” which would completely nullify his position, appears only occasionally in industrial discourse, it is nevertheless the real structuring motif of kinematography in these years. In many respects, it was through this concept that the industrial discourse on cinema found concrete agreement on the ways of making kinematographic scenes, in which it brought together the singular (art) and the multiple (mass production). And multiplicity, before it was a factor in the diversity of the kinematographic scenes produced, describes perfectly the very structure of the large firms which dominated the French and world film markets. Thus Pathé’s industrial infrastructure, in order to meet the needs involved in converting to mass production, was spread over several sites, each with its own role to play: Vincennes and Montreuil were devoted to shooting the scenes and Joinville to the more technical work of developing negatives and striking prints; the Belleville plant in Paris was used to manufacture equipment; sales and later rentals took place on rue Saint-Augustin (and later rue Favart); the head office was located on rue de Richelieu; and, finally, the company’s phonograph operations were set up in Chatou.

Despite this scattering of facilities, these different activities systematically benefited from their work being divided into *ateliers* (workshops), which Pathé had borrowed from industry of the day, as scenes depicting "art and industry" make clear.[32] The place in which scenes were shot was no exception; to describe it, in 1907 the company openly preferred the term *atelier* to *théâtre de prises de vues* (film recording theater), which was more common at the time. The text in which the company introduced its activities implicitly explains the reasons behind this choice of vocabulary, describing "the magnificent plant of [its] acting workshop [*atelier de pose*] in Vincennes, whose vast dimensions recall those of a theater; equipped with every specialized form of machinery, it makes it possible to create the most discerning scenes in a minimum amount of time."[33] Indeed while the word "theater" might refer to a conception of artistic practice based on uncounted time (that of rehearsals), the term "workshop" was better suited to a site where, on the contrary, the length of time taken to carry out a task was a decisive factor (Taylorism and the precise timing of work, which was being implemented in France at this time, could not have failed to appeal to a profession in which the size of the product – the length of the scene, described in meters – determined its sale or rental price, although this is another matter).[34]

The Pathé company was thus made up of a series of workshops, grouped together geographically according to the connections between them (something this text goes on clearly to describe: "they added to this acting workshop a workshop which produces mechanically, using special techniques, the colors of scenes published in color") and always seen in light of the same industrial logic. As a result, the shooting of scenes was not confined to a single workshop, whose artistic activity would confer upon it a kind of symbolic extraterritoriality: here as elsewhere, the rules of industrial production held sway. The rare evidence we have on how work in the acting workshop was carried out confirms that everything went on there the way it would in a plant producing any other sort of consumer good at the time. Thus a young, beginning camera operator, seeing the studios of the Société cinématographique des auteurs et gens de lettres in Vincennes for the first time in 1908, describes how Charles Pathé and Albert Capellani explained the company's practices to him: "There were the usual

introductions, then recommendations, among them following the instructions of one's boss, obeying orders, etc., and especially good behavior and … observing the schedule!"[35] Here too we should not be surprised that a camera operator was treated like a common worker, because the business structure of Pathé and Gaumont was based, precisely, on an identical hierarchy in each workshop, resulting in every worker, no matter what their function, having the same status as in other industries. The personnel was thus an aggregate of vocational groups: manual laborers, workers, engineers, etc. Employees who worked on the shooting of scenes were, moreover, interchangeable, at least during the period when mass production was introduced (1905–8); workers carrying out tasks in one workshop were interchangeable with others carrying out the same task in another. Set designers and camera operators were not supposed to have a unique way of working or personal style and thus had to be able to adapt to various kinds of scenes and to the methods of different *metteurs en scène*. In fact when the consultant Georges Benoit-Lévy, related to Edmond, advised the Pathé company on how to promote "close working relations among all [its] members,"[36] he made no distinction, except perhaps a hierarchical one, amongst personnel, and his recommendations applied to every workshop: "In a large industrial organization like ours, everyone should have ideas, everyone should be mindful of the advancements or improvements to be made. Every one of us – manual laborers, workers, engineers, and managers – is constantly thinking about the changes that could be useful to the work they are assigned."[37] In fact, naming the tasks involved in shooting scenes began during this period only in internal documents (such as financial records where the amounts paid to operators were noted), never in public discourse. Officially, set designers, camera operators, and others belonged to the series of professions usually represented in industry. Only with the *film d'art*, around 1908–10, did the functions and names of these employees see the light of day, a practice inspired by the theater and whose goal was to give films artistic surplus value. Thus in 1911 the poster for the film *Caprice du Vainqueur* (*Caesar in Egypt*), of the "Pathé Frères art series," mentions the "adaptation and mise en scène by Messrs. Zecca and Andréani," the "set design by Mr. Joubert," and the "costumes by the Maison Garnier."

The remuneration system lends credence to this impression of set designers, camera operators, and others being treated like workers, because it was based, even for *metteurs en scène*, on payment according to the quantity produced and pegged, in a sense, to "productivity."[38] This principle was still in operation in 1914, when Louis Feuillade renegotiated his contract with Gaumont: he was paid to shoot 14,400 meters of negative that year (article V of the contract) and for each meter shot "over and above this output" he was paid an additional sum that was high in comparison to the low cost of its production.[39] Finally, he was paid a bonus "in order to encourage Metteurs en scène to increase their output."[40] Obviously, if a *metteur en scène* is treated the same way as an industrial engineer in conventional industry, it is because the entire production system for kinematographic scenes, based on mass output and profitability, is itself the same as other industrial procedures.

Scenes in Series

It is thus impossible to think that the importance of such a structure did not extend as far as the film shoot or was suspended as soon as the crank handle of the camera began to be turned. Of course, it has already been remarked that the concept "series" can be used to classify scenes shot since the earliest years of the century: at Pathé, the first series consisted of "outdoor scenes, general views and genre scenes," the second of "comic scenes," the third of "trick scenes and transformation scenes," the fourth of "sports scenes – acrobatics," the fifth of "historical, political, military and current events scenes," the sixth of "broad scenes with a spicy element," the seventh of "dance and ballet scenes," the eighth of "dramatic and realistic scenes," the ninth of "fairy-play and fairy-tale scenes," the tenth of "religious and biblical scenes," the eleventh of "phono-film scenes," and the twelfth of "art and industry scenes" (which until 1907 were known as "diverse scenes"). That some have seen in these "series" kinds of "genres … numbered and classified like aesthetic categories,"[41] is undoubtedly the result of a misuse of language, or teleological intent, because the concept series refers instead to a "division in which the objects it wishes to

enumerate are classified in sequence,”[42] similar to the system used to study plants, for example.[43]

This classification in series in catalogues (for both itinerant and fixed-venue customers) had no reason to involve aesthetics, especially since it appeared at a time, in the first years of the century, when the question of art with respect to kinematography had not yet been posed. It was more likely the case, as the common use of the term series would suggest, that it was a way of giving order to films once they began to appear in catalogues in very large numbers. The creation of series was thus a consequence of mass production, which grew and became more refined as industrialization grew, from 1905 to 1908. But this production structure also functioned as a call to create diversified programs, which was one of the principal features vaunted in advertisements and newspaper articles such as this one: “The program that has been announced is extremely varied and is the harmonious result of various well-handled initiatives.”[44] Serial production made it possible to add new work module by module, retaining the architecture (the sequence of series) while changing some of its aspects (a scene in one series or another). Series gave screenings their modular quality, their “series of series”[45] quality, and transformed each screening into a show whose projectionist, who decided the order of the series, was in part the author – to the point that some screenings advertised a list of films and declared that “the gentle public in this fair town will see unfold before its amazed eyes the following views, *in the course of the programs* …”[46] But while film publishers sought out programming variety as a way to sell their wares, itinerant exhibitors placed their hopes on variety in their audiences, which enabled them to maximize their profits on the scenes they had purchased. Gradually, beginning in 1907–8, these varied programs came to be built on certain principles, as Jean-Jacques Meusy explains:

> [T]wo comic films, two dramas or two documentaries were not placed back to back. Apart from the principle of variety, the comic film had a specific role to play: it served as an antidote to the dramas and even to the documentaries and actualities. It freed the viewer’s mind from the tensions brought about not only by the dramas but more generally by any ‘serious’ subject. One feeling should drive out another, and ending a

> program on a dark drama, which might have left the viewer in a funk, had to be avoided at all costs. Viewers should not leave the establishment distressed by what they had seen. This is why a comic film often closed the show, or even each part of the program.[47]

This structure, based on the variety made possible by series, was familiar to audiences, who attended film shows with it in mind, as this commentary from 1913 makes clear: “People enter the cinema haphazardly, the way they go into a café. They spend a pleasant half hour, or an hour, for a relatively modest sum.”[48] We thus see a complete agreement between supply and demand, between economic strategy and viewers’ wishes. So much so that we might think that the transition to film rental and to dedicated cinemas might have been a strategic response to the onset of mass production, one which did not necessarily meet the wishes of another kind of demand, that of the audiences for itinerant shows: an exhibition and distribution system had to be perfected in which viewers, unlike the program, varied little. In other words, the production of series and serial production could only fully function if scenes circulated in the form of series of scenes within programs, series of programs within cinemas, and series of cinemas within geographical territories (hence Pathé’s interest in dividing France up into zones controlled by a film rental company). In this system, the brevity of the scenes in each series (the era’s feature films, considerably longer than the average of 300 meters, did not become common until 1913) made it easy to replace them (they were inexpensive, because their sale and rental costs were calculated by the meter) and facilitated their brief period of exhibition, made necessary by the fact that a cinema’s audience would be made up of regulars. In this way, an industrial choice (mass production) had consequences for a scene’s mode of existence (its length and the series to which it belonged).

Series, Serial Production, and Mode of Exhibition

Given this system's impact on a scene's mode of existence, how could it also not have had an impact on its mode of exhibition? The answer is obvious once we recall that most French film production ended up in foreign markets, especially the United States ("France represents only 8 percent of the film market," it was observed in 1908),[49] where different exhibition circumstances were in play. While traveling in the United States in 1908, Léon Gaumont wrote to his production manager, Louis Feuillade, explaining that they could export "two reels per week … or 600 meters."[50] In a later letter he was even more precise: "To make up exhibition reels film renters must, as you know, have two *series*, one from 60 to 100 meters in length and the other from 160 to 240 meters."[51] Note that exports required Gaumont to think in *series* of scene lengths, giving the impression that films were conceived in terms of length before any thought was given to their content. What we see most of all in these letters is that the programs exported could not go beyond a specific length, and that the choice of films, their length, and even their form had to be adapted to this length. The mode of exhibition of scenes during this period, whether we call it a system of monstrative attractions or a mode of primitive representation,[52] was unique in that it made it possible to create modules of pluripunctual scenes; it thus also made it possible to remove, or not, some of their tableau shots. In fact a great number of films during these early years (until about 1908 and the appearance of the Films d'Art company, whose films usually had a more rigid structure) repeated alternating tableau shots (one of the best-known examples of this is the 1906 film *Je vais chercher du pain* [*I Fetch the Bread*]), some of which could be eliminated at will. In this way the "merchandise" could be adapted to demand, whether what was most important to this demand was length (in the case of exports) or price (in the case of sale and/or rental in the French market). In any event, this undoubtedly explains in part the great number of scenes presented in catalogues in clearly modular forms.

In this light, we might see scenes as one of the following:

1 As a series of more or less autonomous (sub-)scenes whose modularity was defined by the film publisher. Thus the "natural scene" *Excursion en Italie* (*A Trip through Italy*, 1904), for example, could be

purchased or rented in independent modules, as the Pathé catalogue makes clear: “To satisfy a desire expressed by our customers, we have decided to supply the tableaux in the scene *Excursion en Italie* separately,”[53] with each tableau, it would appear given its length, being limited to a single shot.

2 As a series of views whose only thing in common is the topic joining them under the title of the scene. In this case, modularity is made possible by the film publisher but is not explicitly referred to. Thus the “natural scene” *Pêche en pleine mer* (*High Sea Fishing*, 1905) is presented as a “sequence of views taken on the open sea depicting the various stages of trawl fishing.”[54] In this case, the scene could be shortened either by the publisher for export or by the exhibitor. As we have seen, there is reason for thinking that the use of alternating editing in Pathé films within this specific serial mode created both modularity (through the repetition of alternation, some of whose occurrences could be eliminated) and a relative degree of continuity (through the relationship it established, with varying degrees of success, between the two alternating elements).[55]

3 As part of a thematic series, meaning as part of a group of scenes conceived separately and being released over a period of time. In this case, the publisher explicitly left it up to the exhibitor to carry out the modularity. Yet another of Pathé’s “natural scenes,” *Au Japon* (*In Japan*, 1906), corresponds to this principle because right from the start, with the first scene, the company announced a kind of series of successors: “Our customers will be pleased, we are sure, with the new format we are offering them with our series La Vie au Japon (Life in Japan). Even more than the unique sites that will unfold before your amazed viewers’ eyes, they will be able to observe every phase of life in Japan in various fields: Art and Industry, Customs and Ways of Life, Sports, etc.… The first scene we have the privilege of offering to our customers is *Les Rapides de la rivière Ozu* [*The Ozu River Rapids*].”[56]

Some might object that all these examples are from the same series (natural scenes) and that this proves only the importance of modular serialization within a single category of scenes. An examination of

catalogues of the period, however, quickly demonstrates that these three features of serialization are also found in fictional scenes. In the first category we find views which make up scenes such as *Vie et passion de Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ* (*Life and Passion of Christ*) ("a scene divided into four series which can be sold separately," the 1907 Pathé catalogue informs us)[57] – this includes every scene listed in the catalogues under a "tableau heading" emphasizing the autonomy of each[58] – but also "dramatic scenes" such as *Exécutions capitales* (Capital executions, 1903), described in the Pathé catalogue in the following manner: "we include in this series every kind of capital execution in use around the world that we have already issued, whether as an actuality or as a tableau forming part of our great scenes."[59] This description alone would be enough to justify the importance of the concept "series" in the making of kinematographic scenes, which could thus either be broken up (like *Excursion en Italie*) or patched together (this is clearly the case in the present example) out of elements as distinct from each other as much as they are similar to create a changeable whole.

The second kind of serialization concerns the countless scenes from this period in which the story proceeds through accumulation, replaying a situation at will in ever-different settings. Here again the description found in the catalogues in no way conceals the serial nature of these scenes, such as *Mésaventures d'un chapeau* (*Misadventures of a Hat*, 1905), in which "a man buys a hat one morning in a department store. A *series* of accidents then occurs …"[60] Also worthy of mention is *Échappé de sa cage* (*Escaped from the Cage*, 1906), described as a "*series* of very lively scenes studded with ludicrous incidents in a new manner."[61] Finally, the third kind of-serialization, in fiction films, may be implicit – when scenes in catalogues follow on one after the other and develop a common idea (such as the anti-Black ridicule found in three films from late 1906, *Mésaventures d'une mission nègre à Paris* [*Misadventures of a Negro King in Paris*], *Vengeance de nègre* [*Negro's Revenge*] and *Les effets du lait noir* [*The Effects of Black Milk*]) – or explicit, when what is taking place in a sense is the construction of a diegesis in tune with the story of the preceding scene. An excellent example of this is *Au bagne* (*Scenes of Convict Life*, 1905), because the

Pathé catalogue suggests its modular quality – "this scene … shows the convict step by step" – and then highlights it through the description of various tableaux, all of them autonomous, before connecting it with an earlier production: "This scene might be seen as the follow-up to another played by the same performers, *Les Apaches de Paris* [*Apaches in Paris*, 1905], whose still-unexhausted success was so great."[62]

This brief description is also interesting in the way it suggests what separates the two ways in which the two uses of seriality were employed during the period of industrialization (approximately 1905–8) and the subsequent artistic period (by which I mean the widespread use of artistic series and the discourse on art in film beginning in 1908).[63] These two periods share a recourse to mass production in order to meet the needs of a mass audience; from one period to the next, however, the audience's access to this output changed: industrialization gave rise to film rental (while Pathé did not abandon the sale of films until 1907, it became less important during industrialization) and the appearance of fixed venues (even if the system of itinerant screenings did not end abruptly).[64] Under the former system, what varied were the viewers, while in the latter what varied were the scenes. This was true to such an extent that during the industrialization period, scenes had to be dreamt up to satisfy a great diversity of viewers (series of spectators), both over time (scenes were screened for several years) and in space (every region of France and foreign countries). Identifiable Lumière films (which recorded a place at a given moment) were succeeded by Pathé's de-particularized scenes whose stories were not situated in a precise city or country and to which one cannot assign a precise date – with the rare exception of scenes whose interest lay in their depiction of an attraction either geographical (*L'Odyssée d'un paysan à Paris* [*A Countryman in Paris*], 1905) or temporal (historical scenes).[65] In the end this aspect, when considered alongside the strict directives around the film shoot issued by the company's management (tripod shots only, etc.), gives scenes produced by the large manufacturers a serial production quality in the sense that within each series potentially unique elements become constants.

At the same time, the mix of audiences in itinerant fairground screenings and occasional screenings in varied locations during the first system, which dominated until 1907–8, made it possible to replicate successful stories by varying them slightly. This is where the three kinds of serialization I discussed above take on their full meaning and function, and finer-grained workings of the concept series might be able to add even more to this discussion – narrative recurrences from one scene to the next, for example, which work according to the principle of contextualized accumulation (the second kind of serialization) simply by offering it a new framework. The same is true of numerous scenes which employ a point-of-view strategy: in 1905, for example, the two scenes *Curiosité d'un concierge* (A janitor's curiosity) and *Les étrennes du facteur* (*The Postman's Christmas Box*), released a month apart, both employ the idea of a character going from floor to floor of a building (something his job permits) and taking advantage of the opportunity to watch what goes on in people's apartments.[66] Here we can see that the principal problem facing this industrial production of scenes was that of supplying something identical (what works always and everywhere: series) in new ways. In this dialectic between the multiple and the singular during this period, however, the former held sway; while with the rise of fixed venues this relationship appears to reverse. Beginning in 1908 we certainly see the use of comic series around a recurring character, but this character has a different adventure each time (whereas earlier the same device was repeated from film to film – a chase, for example – with minor variations, in particular the characters depicted: mothers in law, policemen, etc.).[67]

Repeat attendance at programs, beginning in 1908, made the constant addition of new material necessary, to the point that the concept "series," as a way of classifying films, gradually fell away somewhat (by the early 1910s there was no longer any trace of Pathé's twelve series in its catalogues, and the trade press was speaking of "new firms, each specializing in a particular *genre*")[68] or was given a new meaning which lessened somewhat its multiple quality (deriving from its industrial production) and emphasized its singularity (its artistic quality): symptomatically, talk at the time was of "art series" and catalogue descriptions of scenes added details, such as actors' names, to distinguish

them from one other. At the same time, on the level of discourse, there was a shift from an industrial vocabulary to an artistic semantic field ("the Pathé Frères' magical color system lends its palette to *Le roman de la momie* [*The Romance of the Mummy*], 1911, and turns it into a masterpiece").[69] By the early 1910s, what was at stake was cultivating loyal viewers, especially through the use of artistic criteria (the style of a particular art series, the unique acting style of a particular comedian, etc.), and this change in production was logically accompanied by a modification of industrial strategy: Pathé and Gaumont offloaded some of their costs by outsourcing film shoots to more or less independent companies. They thus no longer tried to impose overly strict production rules, having become well aware of the financial benefits of such artistic freedom, which highlighted the unique qualities of their multiple series of films. Beginning in 1909, Pathé's board of directors spoke of its change of strategy in the following terms: "Our director, following laborious studies, has adopted a number of new production systems which will lower production costs considerably."[70] Here again Peter Bächlin was most decidedly not mistaken when he wrote: "The very high risk factor associated with it [the film industry] and the measures taken to reduce or eliminate this risk have given its production, distribution, and exhibition quite peculiar qualities."[71]

Notes

1 The French title of this chapter refers to "La production française en série(s)," a play on words central to the author's argument that is unfortunately difficult to convey in English. In the plural, "production en séries" refers to films made in series, and the singular "production en série" to a mode of industrial production better known in English as "assembly-line" or "mass" production. A lesser-known term for this in English, employed here, is "serial production," and the reader is asked to recall these meanings and this play on words in the French throughout the chapter. – Trans.

2 André Gaudreault comes to a similar conclusion in his article "*Les vues cinématographiques* selon Georges Méliès ou: comment Mitry et Sadoul

avaient peut-être raison d'avoir tort (même si c'est surtout Deslandes qu'il faut lire et relire) …," in *Georges Méliès l'illusionniste fin de siècle?*, eds. Jacques Malthête and Michel Marie (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997).

3 Peter Bächlin, *Histoire économique du cinéma*, trans. Maurice Muller-Strauss (Paris: La Nouvelle Édition, 1947), 12. This passage has been translated from the more widely known and available French translation of Peter Bächlin's book quoted here by the author.

4 I purposefully employ here the expression "making kinematographic scenes" (*conception de bandes cinématographiques*) and not, like André Gaudreault, "making animated pictures" (*fabrication de vues animées*), which describes the very beginnings of French film production but does not correspond to the entire early cinema period.

5 Charles Pathé, *Écrits autobiographiques* [1940], ed. Pierre Lherminier (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 168.

6 Georges Méliès, "Kinematograhic Views," trans. Stuart Liebman and Timothy Barnard, in André Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction: From Kinematography to Cinema* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 136–52.

7 André Gaudreault occasionally uses this term (*confection* in French), but usually prefers another of Méliès's terms, *fabrication* (found in the expression *fabrication de vues animées*). [In the English edition of Gaudreault's book, *confection* is sometimes translated "artisanal manufacture" and both *confection* and *fabrication* as "making." *Confection* is a noun describing an action which can be translated variously as concoct, confect, fabricate, and manufacture. Today all of these terms, with the exception of manufacture, have strong negative connotations associated with artificiality or deceit, while manufacture, which once meant to make by hand, has now come to mean produce industrially. Where possible *confection* has thus been rendered here as craft, and elsewhere as making, made, etc. – Trans.]

8 Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction*, 143.

9 See Méliès, "Kinematographic Views."

10 Louis-Nicolas Bescherelle, *Dictionnaire national ou dictionnaire universel de la langue française*, vol. 1 (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1858), 727.

The emphasis and capitalization are found in the original text. While today the term “mechanical” is suggestive of machinery, various meanings of the word in English, many of them now obsolete, derive from an older and opposite sense of hand-made or artisanal.

11 Ibid., 248.

12 Janet Staiger, “The Director System: The First Years,” in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Style* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 116.

13 *Catalogue Pathé 1907*, 3–4. Unless indicated otherwise, subsequent quotations in this section are taken from this source.

14 See Émile Kress, *Conférences sur la cinématographie organisées par le Syndicat des auteurs et des gens de lettres* (Paris: Cinéma-Revue, 1912), 69.

15 Staiger, “The Director System,” 117.

16 *Catalogue Pathé 1907*, 4.

17 Kress, *Conférences sur la cinématographie*, 34 (third lecture, on the “théâtre cinématographique”).

18 Catalogue description of *Un drame à Venise* (*A Venetian Tragedy*) in the *Supplément d’octobre 1906* of the *Catalogue Pathé*.

19 On this topic, see Laurent Le Forestier, *Aux sources de l’industrie du cinéma: Le modèle Pathé, 1905–1908* (Paris: L’Harmattan/AFRHC, 2006).

20 Bescherelle, *Dictionnaire national*, 1066.

21 In France during these years, companies making films often adopted the term “publisher” (*éditeur*) to describe themselves.

22 Bescherelle, *Dictionnaire national*, 443.

23 This is the term (*marchandises*) found in the “Conditions générales de vente” section of the *Catalogue Pathé 1907*, 5–6.

24 On this topic, see Laurent Le Forestier, “Un tournant du cinéma des premiers temps: le passage à la production de masse chez Pathé entre 1905 et 1908,” *1895* 37 (July 2002): 5–21.

25 Report from the board of directors to the general meeting, June 22, 1911.

26 Georges Dureau, “Le splendide isolement de Pathé fréres [sic],” *Ciné-Journal* 15 (November 26, 1908): 1.

27 Ibid.

28 Gustave Babin, “Les coulisses du cinématographe,” *L’Illustration* 3396 (March 28, 1908), reprinted in *Les grands dossiers de l’Illustration: le cinéma* (Paris: SEFAG et l’Illustration, 1987), 22. For a discussion of this article, see Roland Cosandey, “Cinéma 1908, films à trucs et Film d’Art: une campagne de *L’Illustration*,” *Cinémathèque* 3 (Spring/Summer 1993): 58–71.

29 Maxime Miane, “Droit et jurisprudence du cinéma,” *Annuaire général de la Cinématographie française et étrangère* (Paris: Ciné-Journal, 1917), 540. As Alain Carou remarks, “the introduction to the text indicates that it was written in 1914 and that the war delayed its publication.” See Alain Carou, *Le cinéma français et les écrivains: Histoire d’une rencontre 1906–1914* (Paris: École nationale des Chartes/AFRHC, 2002), 264.

30 Quoted by Richard Abel, *The Cine Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 28.

31 It appears that it was precisely at this time that serial production became widespread. The expression “en série” entered dictionaries in 1904, where it was defined as “operations and tasks carried out one after the other.” See Alain Rey, ed., *Dictionnaire culturel en langue française* (Paris: Le Robert, 2005), 731.

32 See for example the catalogue description of *La métallurgie au Creusot* (*Scenes at Creusot’s Steel Foundry*, 1905): “This scene shows the principal stages in the production of steel in the famous Schneider et Cie. plant in Creusot.” *Catalogue Pathé 1907*, 250.

33 “Historique de la cinématographie,” *Catalogue Pathé 1907*, 3–4.

34 While Frederick Taylor’s book *The Principles of Scientific Management* was translated into French in 1912 under the title *La direction des ateliers*, his principles, which had begun to be applied in the United States in 1890, were well known in France quite early on through travelers, books, and articles (such as Émile Levasseur’s book *L’ouvrier américain*, published in 1898), to the point that the historian Patrick Fridenson gives 1904 as the year when “Taylorism arrived in French society.” See Patrick Fridenson, “Un tournant taylorien de la société

française (1904–1918),” *Les Annales: Économies, sociétés, civilisation* 42, no. 5 (1987): 1031–60.

35 Pierre Trimbach, *Quand on tournait la manivelle … ou les mémoires d’un opérateur de la Belle Époque* (Paris: Éditions CEFAG, 1970), 16.

36 *Phono-Ciné-Gazette* 73 (April 1, 1908): 546.

37 Ibid.

38 This was the term used by economic analysts to demonstrate the superiority of the mode of production adopted by Pathé: “We thus conclude that the Pathé Frères company has a level of productivity of 193 percent, more than twice that of Éclipse and Gaumont.” See R. Binet and G. Hausser, *Les sociétés de cinématographe, études financières* (Paris: Éditions de la France économique et financière, 1908), 81.

39 Second “Nota” to article VIII. This contract is reproduced in Alain Carou and Laurent Le Forestier, eds., *Louis Feuillade: Retour aux sources. Correspondances et archives* (Paris: AFRHC/Gaumont, 2007), 57–64.

40 Letter from Léon Gaumont to Louis Feuillade, January 31, 1914. Reproduced in Carou and Le Forestier, *Louis Feuillade*, 65. The capital letter is in the original.

41 Jacques Deslandes and Jacques Richard, *Histoire comparée du cinéma*, vol. 2, *Du cinématographe au cinéma (1896–1906)* (Tournai: Casterman, 1968), 312.

42 This definition appears as early as 1798 (and reappears in late nineteenth-century dictionaries) in the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie* and is reproduced in René Journet, Jacques Petit, and Guy Robert, *Mots et dictionnaires (1798–1878)*, vol. 9 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966), 2792.

43 For a discussion of the meaning that the term “series” could have had for film companies, see Laurent Le Forestier, “Les ‘Scènes comiques’ du cinéma français des premiers temps: genre ou série?,” in *Le cinéma français face aux genres*, ed. Raphaëlle Moine (Paris: AFRHC, 2005).

44 Hugues Nau, “Cinémas,” *L’Excelsior*, March 6, 1914, reproduced in André Rossel, *Histoire de France à travers les journaux du temps passé: La Belle Époque (1898–1914)* (Paris: À l’enseigne de l’arbre verdoyant, 1983), 297.

45 André Gaudreault discussed this aspect in the final section of his article "Du simple au multiple: le cinéma comme série de séries," *Cinémas*13, nos. 1–2 (2002): 33–47.

46 Poster from the Modern Cinéma Lumière dated 1907. My emphasis.

47 Jean-Jacques Meusy, "Les bandes comiques face à l'arrivée des films 'kilométriques'," *1895* 61 (September 2010): 157.

48 "Le cinéma contre le théâtre," *L'Excelsior*, November 19, 1913, reproduced in Rossel, *Histoire de France*, 296.

49 Binet and Hausser, *Les sociétés de cinématographe*, 29.

50 Letter, September 22, 1908, reproduced in Carou and Le Forestier, *Louis Feuillade*, 41.

51 Letter, February 16, 1909, reproduced in Carou and Le Forestier, *Louis Feuillade*, 46. My emphasis.

52 The concept "system of monstrative attractions" was proposed by André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, while the "Primitive Mode of Representation" comes from Noël Burch. See André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, "Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History?," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, [1989] 2006), 365–80; and Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, ed. and trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

53 *Catalogue Pathé 1907*, 16.

54 Ibid., 18. Various dictionaries of the day attest to the fact that the words *suite* (succession, continuation) and *série* (series) were synonymous.

55 On this topic, see Philippe Gauthier, *Le montage alterné avant Griffith: Le cas Pathé* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008).

56 *Catalogue Pathé 1907*, 20.

57 Ibid., 245.

58 On this topic, see Alain Boillat and Valentine Robert, "*Vie et passion de Jésus-Christ* (Pathé, 1902–1905): hétérogénéité des 'tableaux,' déclinaison des motifs," *1895* 60 (March 2010): 32–63.

59 *Catalogue Pathé 1907*, 171.

60 Ibid. My emphasis.

61 Ibid. The exact date of this scene is not known. My emphasis.

62 Ibid. *Les Apaches de Paris* was made in 1905.

63 On this topic, see the special issue of the journal *1895* 56 (December 2008) on “Le Film d’Art” edited by Alain Carou and Béatrice de Pastre. Symptomatically, when a large daily newspaper such as *L’Excelsior* covered the cinema in long articles in 1913, it was to talk about “the conflict between cinema and theater” and discuss the cinema’s artistic merits, for the most part avoiding any economic discourse. See Rossel, *Histoire de France*, 296–8.

64 On this topic, see Jean-Jacques Meusy, *Cinémas de France 1894–1918* (Paris: Arcadia, 2009).

65 It is significant, however, that some historical films attempted to transform the specific time frame of their subject into a “timeless story” (in the words of the catalogue description of *Un drame à Venise*).

66 On the fashion for these point-of-view films, see André Gaudreault, ed., *Ce que je vois de mon ciné* … (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1988).

67 On this topic, see Laurent Guido and Laurent Le Forestier, “Un cas d’école: Renouveler l’histoire du cinéma comique français des premiers temps,” *1895* 61 (September 2010): 9–76.

68 *Bulletin hebdomadaire Pathé-Frères*, no. 2 (1911). My emphasis.

69 Ibid.

70 Report of the board of directors to the general meeting of June 8, 1909.

71 Bächlin, *Histoire économique*, 12.

11

Early American Film Publications

Film Consciousness, Self Consciousness

Santiago Hidalgo

One of the struggles evident in early film discourse was finding an effective language for defining and talking about the increasingly complex phenomenon of film. The proliferation of words designating film or aspects of film during the period of early cinema is a potential source of confusion for historians interpreting early writing about film.[1] Even film historians from the time – those living among and using the terms – demonstrated a similar level of disorientation, if not impatience. In 1899, Henry V. Hopwood referred to the abundance of names for film-related technologies as "etymological monstrosities."[2] This struggle was most apparent in the many American film trade journals that began publishing in 1907. The journals collectively produced the vast majority of written attention toward cinema during these early years. Commenting on the outburst of film-terminologies emerging across the globe, G. Dureau, in his 1910 article "The Moving Picture Babel," noted: "our cousins torture themselves to understand us and we don't understand ourselves."[3] Complicating matters for those trying to follow discussions in early film discourse is that many key words in our film vocabulary, such as "director," "shot," "editing," "cinematography," "camera movement" and "art" either did not exist or were used in ways that often do not conform to our understanding of the words today. Even some terms for designating existing discourse about film follow this pattern. It is possible, for instance, to peruse a film journal from 1907, either *Moving Picture World* or *Views and Film Index*, and encounter

a section named “film reviews” with texts resembling “reviews,” but consisting instead of catalogue descriptions of films published by the journal for exhibitors.[4] There are, in fact, signs that some film scholars have confused these pieces of writing for film reviews,[5] and the evidence suggests that even contemporaries found this heading confusing, with both of these sections renamed in the following years to more representative designations (*Moving Picture World* to “Stories of the Films” and *Views and Film Index* to “Descriptions of New Films”).

The distinction between two broad, sometimes conflicting conceptualizations of film determined much of early writing about film: one as a recording device, giving rise to the view that film is a transparent window onto a profilmic reality considered the locus of significance, and the other as a constructed object, an opaque window which draws attention, implicated in the process of creating narratives, effects and meaning.[6] Although the latter concept of film is often described through the language of art and aesthetics, it is not necessary to the recognition of film as a constructed object, even if these vocabularies play a role in casting attention on certain features of film that highlight this nature.[7] An example of this type of awareness of film would be the recognition that editing creates a particular set of effects or meaning, or that the image itself is an object of aesthetic interest because of a procedure – such as framing – the photographer undertook. Seeing film as a recording device implies focusing attention on the story *as if* it were a play that had been merely recorded, or on photography in terms of its ability to provide a clear view of the profilmic reality (sufficiently lit, in focus, and so forth). Much of the changing terrain of language, the appearance or disappearance of certain words, the emergence of a metaphorical way of talking about film, the development of a language of authorship, can be explained as a function of these different ways of imagining film, in which an awareness of film as a constructed object becomes increasingly manifest between 1909 and 1914.

Concurrent with this awareness of film apparent in language use was a growing self awareness among those using and creating the language, arising from an attention to discursive activities, such as film criticism, an attention to the way films were experienced in different contexts, and an

attention to the language being used for talking about film. It is unclear to what degree these distinct regions of awareness are related – an awareness of the constructed nature of film and self awareness linked to the experience of writing and thinking about film – but some intersecting points seem clear enough. For instance, an understanding of film, or of any object, can be achieved through the study of the language used to define it. This is a common approach to analysis in pragmatic philosophy, and which in fact occurred in at least one example of early film discourse from 1909.[8] Also pertinent is the way film itself, as a technology, communication device and aesthetic form, participated in creating experiences that resulted in a different way of understanding oneself in relation to the world, as the work of Francesco Casetti illustrates in his analysis of "film gazes."[9] Ultimately, there is of course the essential fact that the same individuals – early writers about film – partook in both sets of awareness, creating a dialectical, back and forth relationship in which a realization in one region of awareness becomes evident in another. For this reason, this chapter is the study of a consciousness emerging in activities centering on film. The activities are divided into distinct regions for the purposes of examining some of their constituent parts, but not because I believe such divisions actually form part of the emerging consciousness.

The concepts of film that writers used in journal discourse were usually not explicitly discussed. It is rather from an attention to the movement of language occurring in a variety of discursive domains – headings, titles, articles and reviews – that such concepts are partially revealed. It is also this same language from which arises a field of conceptual possibilities for thinking about film;[10] thus, charting the movement of language is, in effect, charting the range of possible thoughts – the *cinematic episteme* to use a current term[11] – available to someone in a certain historical and institutional context. It is possible to think about the collective changes occurring at the level of language, then, which includes the regular activity, the "steady forms of life" from which such language grows, as the emergence of a kind of film consciousness.[12] The statements of individual writers, which serve as the evidence for constructing an understanding of the way film was thought about at a given time, ought to be considered as

forming part of an institutional or social life, with concomitant activities, interests and ways of talking, that strongly determine the particular character of the statements. This is significant because sometimes these statements are mistakenly taken as factual representations of someone's thoughts or, more problematically, of public thought. This chapter is interested in charting two distinct but overlapping sets of awareness apparent in early film publications between 1909 and 1914: the awareness writers displayed of film as a constructed object, and the awareness these same writers began showing of their own role in the process of determining the way film was to be thought about. The impetus of the study lies in showing that direct statements about film must include an understanding of how such statements are situated within a larger pattern of institutional thinking, a part of which is only accessible through an analysis of the way language was used in a variety of contexts. In effect, to understand the-statement one must understand the social activity in which the statement occurs.

The Four Language Traits of Early Film Publications

The advent of film publications in the United States was April 26, 1906, when *Views and Film Index* was launched.[13] In the next few years, several new trade journals, such as *Moving Picture World* (1907), *Show World* (1907), *Motion Picture News* (1908), *Nickelodeon* (1909)[14] and *Film Reports* (ca. 1910) entered the market. Additionally, already established journals such as *Variety* and the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, both of which opened film criticism departments during these years,[15] turned their attention to film. Suddenly, a film trade press was established.

Early film publications addressed members of the film industry, exhibitors, exchanges and filmmakers. But they appealed as well to the public, which avidly read the journals.[16] They reported on nearly all aspects of film: equipment and technology, patent litigations, films available for rental, pre-production information, exhibitions, production

companies and personalities. They also functioned as a forum for discussion by means of readers submitting weekly questions and comments, critics analyzing aspects of the industry, and editors adamantly defending film from public criticism. They mediated one of film's most intense periods of transformation – between roughly 1907 and 1914 – with the move from single reel to feature length films, and with significant changes to film aesthetics, narrative construction, production practices, exhibition conditions and audience spectatorship.[17]

The public status of cinema underwent a dramatic change during this time as well, shifting from significant public disapproval to tentative endorsement, which the journals played a role in mediating.[18]

In the midst of this volatility, early film publication writers took up the difficult task of defining cinema and delineating an object of film criticism by developing a practical and standardized language of criticism that served the aims of the journals, the film industry, and the interests of the public. While these objectives were sometimes presented as clear and businesslike, the result of this intersection of ideas and interests produced by writers from different backgrounds was a great deal of experimentation on how to talk about film. It was expressed in a number of forms, among them articles dealing with new ideas about cinema, or criticism that was not always easy to understand from the point of view of trade publication aims. Although the labor of film writers at this time was grounded in routine and everyday film concerns, these modest routines produced over time a formidable body of work that introduced many ideas and vocabularies about cinema into the public domain.[19]

When compared to the rather limited sources of information that exist for studying the reception of the first decade of cinema (1896–1906), the interest of these trade journals becomes more evident. Starting in 1907, there was suddenly an abundance of evidence of how *groups of people* processed the experience of cinema – groups working within a definable trade structure to be sure, but groups nevertheless – which was diligently recorded, directly and indirectly in a variety of language forms, on a weekly and monthly basis. Significantly, the journals also operated in the first few years in the absence of any other *regular* publications on film. Such a

presence gave writers freedom to experiment with format, content and style that might otherwise have been the domain of other publications or-institutions. Contending with a fairly complex reality, and under the pressure of having to write *something* about film on a consistent basis, a sometimes open-ended, "thinking out loud" approach to writing about film emerged, which at times verged on philosophical or poetic reflections. In short, these film trade journals constituted a new film institution during these early years, and many of the writers embraced the opportunity to explore the film medium in ways one might not expect from a trade publication.

The language put into play by writers of the early film trade journals-constituted a movement in language and a changing awareness of film and self. It is a movement that makes them interesting texts for study. There are four significant traits of this language whose usage demonstrates a changing consciousness of film. These are *collectivity*, established by groups of writers; *regularity*, constituted by weekly publications; *extension*, which is their publication over a period of time; and *diversity*, stimulated by the absence of conventions or other competing film institutions. In the analyses that follow, I show how film awareness was represented and communicated in two different regions of discourse and activity: *film consciousness*, as represented in "headings and titles," "articles" and "film criticism," and *self consciousness*, as represented in "metacriticism," "audience study," and "discourse on language". One of the challenges of studying early film publications is in connecting these regions to form a more unified understanding of the background world of the language of early film publications. In general, it is productive to imagine trade publications as "institution-like" in terms of the way knowledge circulated from one area to another and even across journals, making it possible to understand the activity in one region on the basis of the other.

Regions of Film Consciousness

Writers in early American film publications gradually displayed an awareness of the constructed nature of film, including the causes, creators and meaning of films. This awareness was not usually communicated in

explicit statements demonstrating such an understanding, rather it was expressed in the ways language was used over time and in specific contexts. To appreciate this awareness requires attention to the movement of language and a close analysis of terms in early film publications.

One region is quite simply the titles and headings of journals and sections. Changes in titles and headings often occurred without announcement or explanation, and therefore may be interpreted as a reflection of an internal process of reasoning taking place among writers and editors. A coherent logic cannot always be discerned from one title to the next, especially since often only a single word was dropped or added. But over time, in combination with other evidence, a more unified process of thought becomes apparent. André Gaudreault, in his chapter in this collection, provides a sense of how this movement took form in the constant renaming of one journal which, through a series of additions and subtractions from 1889 to 1919, changed from *Optical Magic Lantern Journal and Photographic Enlarger* to *Kinematograph Weekly*. For Gaudreault, this transformation represents a move from one (or several) cultural series to another. Important changes also occurred within journals, communicating other similar internal processes of reasoning, such as the "Film Reviews" section in *Moving Picture World*. In the very first issue, the section was named "Film Chats." It then became "Film Reviews" and then, finally, "Stories of the Films." Since none of these changes were ever explained, the reasoning may be interpreted, in part, through what we know occurred in other areas of the journal. For example, "Film Chats" conveys rather well the character of the eventual criticism that would be published in this journal, which was presented as "comments" (more below), and which sometimes resembled spoken language. The name "Film Chats" is continuous with our knowledge of what occurred elsewhere, suggesting this conceptualization of criticism existed from the outset, even if it was misused in this instance for presenting catalogue descriptions. The eventual change from "Reviews" to "Stories" is significant because of when it occurred – two weeks before the opening of the film criticism section in the same journal – suggesting there was already a sense of the coming confusion that would arise in presenting different kinds of texts under similar heading names.

The naming of the film criticism section in *Moving Picture World* tells an even more meaningful story. When the "Comments on Film Subjects" section was launched there was no mention of the significance of "comments" in the title. The explanation offered was "Yielding to the requests of many readers to take up *criticism* of some of the film subjects, we invited two capable newspaper men to make the rounds of theatres with us last week."[20] Once again, we learn about the background concept defining journal discourse in the heading and not the actual discourse. Finally, the other concept in the title – "film subjects" – is also significant because it is a terminology frequently used in other sections of the journal, particularly in the listings of the films available for rental. The term "film subject" seems to imply a distinction between the film and the content of the film, but this peculiarity does not become fully apparent until the journal finally settles on "Comments on the Films" in 1910. Thus, without even reading the comments or articles, or indeed any other form of discourse in the journals, a moment can be identified when a shift occurred in the way film was conceptualized as a unified object of criticism that no longer distinguished between film and story.

A second region of discourse is perhaps the most commonly cited among historians, that is, the actual group of articles that more or less directly addresses different subjects related to cinema, including the nature of cinema. There is an abundance of material in this area that can be easily read as more or less self-contained ideas which require little other context and which of course express varying degrees of awareness of film. A small sample of such articles includes "The Elusive Quality," "Photodrama and the Child," "Realism," "Photoplay Realism: An Optimistic View," "New Functions of the Motion Picture," "Problems in Pictures," "The Compelling Harmony of the Whole," and "Art in Moving Pictures."[21] Although these arguments are interesting in themselves as film discourse, offering reflections on film as art, the purpose of cinema, and its future, I would like to emphasize here other features that point to the issue of language use becoming a pressing concern for writers. As many film historians know, especially those interested in finding interesting examples of early film discourse, article titles are often misleading in terms of actual content. Sometimes an ambitious idea indicated in the title is barely mentioned in

the article, suggesting in some cases the presence of an intuition that has not yet found a means of expression (and thus, like journal titles and section headings, article titles also suggest a conscious process not apparent in the discourse). The preponderance of invented terms or the formulation of compound terms is a reflection of a search, sometimes conveyed with a tone of frustration directed at others (filmmakers, journals, the public), for a vocabulary or conceptual framework necessary for the expression of an underlying idea. A good example is Thomas Bedding's concept "moving picture photographs" (discussed more below) which combines two terms ("moving pictures" and "photographs") in search of a third idea – film understood as a recording device.[22] It is apparent in these texts that writers experimented, and struggled, with new ways of talking about film. This struggle sometimes met with failure or even ridicule, as Bedding himself noted ("I am often chided for my use of uncommon words"),[23] illustrating the extent to which language was a source of attention and concern for both writers and readers.

Another feature of these articles is the introduction of terms that do not follow standard definitions of their time, or that the authors intended in their context. The usage points to an intention that has not fully taken shape. A word that captures this tension well is "art," which normally carried the meaning of "craft," but which in some contexts seems to connote something more, namely the idea of "creation" essential to the definition of art today. Perhaps no article displays this better than Hulfish's oft-cited "Art in Moving Pictures," which reveals a conflict between the conceptual frameworks of art as craft or creation, and that of film as recording device or constructed object. Hulfish opens his discussion by presenting a dictionary definition of the word "art" in order to determine whether film fits into this category. However, the definition he presents does not yet include the notion of "creation," something which Hulfish seems to sense is necessary. He writes, for example, of pictures expressing "thoughts" and of having "authors" – clear allusions to the idea that films are creations, not transparent windows, conveying some form of intentional meaning. But even as the article employs suggestive terms that touch on the idea of "film as art," Hulfish's argument is grounded in the concept of "film as a recording device." He affirms this contradictory idea when he writes,

"[Photography] should be considered in motography [roughly meaning "the recording side of filmmaking should be considered"] as merely the means for placing before the audience the thoughts of the author of the picture as embodied in changing scenes, *the art of the picture being developed fully in the scenes themselves before the motion picture camera is placed before them*."[24] This excerpt also nicely illustrates the struggle writers displayed in finding an effective language for talking about film. Although each of the terms, once parsed, seems to indicate a distinct thing – "photography" is the process through which "motion picture cameras" produce "moving pictures," each of which form part of "motography" (something on the order of "filmmaking") – later in the article the same terms come to mean different things. For instance, at one point Hulfish suggests "art in a motion picture must exist prior to the photographing of the picture."[25] Further on, he says, "the picture to be motographed must be studied in values of neutral shade."[26] Both of these examples define "picture" as something that exists before and after the photographic process, contradicting his earlier distinction. The term "motography" is also transformed into a verb ("to motograph") and used in a similar sense as "to photograph." In such a linguistic situation, where many overlapping terms are presented, it is not always easy to identify the concept the author has in mind when using a particular term. This is the challenge of reading early writing about film. A linguistic terrain in constant movement is one that contains exciting conceptual possibilities, revealing in the differences, slippages and misuses, a conscious process not only of gradually becoming aware of the complex nature of film but also of actively inventing ways of thinking and talking about it.

The third region – film criticism – is perhaps the most complex because much of what occurs in this realm of language is, like the first region, stated without explanation, but additionally consists of far more complex attempts at describing films. Since conceptualizations of film are usually not mentioned in the descriptions, an analysis of the concepts requires a sort of appreciation of the "cluster" of words entering the description that seem to share a common notion or intention, what Edward Branigan refers to as a "*grammar of an ensemble of words*."[27] For instance, starting in 1909, there

appear many key words we associate with the act of interpretation, such as "illustrates," "represents," "theme," "suggests," "central thought," "inference," "purpose," "intention."[28] The following comment on Selig's *The Highlanders' Defiance* (1910) illustrates this idea of certain words fitting together and operating jointly, especially the use of "graphic reproductions," "deeper meaning," "exert," "influence," "maker," combined with an analysis of a juxtaposition of scenes: "The graphic representation of deaths in battle, followed almost instantly by the equally graphic reproductions of the broken-hearted mourners at home will emphasize, more than mere words can do, the horrors of war, with its waste of life and money. War pictures may be thrilling, but they may convey a deeper meaning, and exert a more powerful and beneficial influence than their makers suspected."[29] Thus, a change in approach to criticism, that is, a tendency toward interpretation, is an indication of a particular type of film awareness. In addition to this it is also an indication, as in the preceding example, of an awareness of a creator behind the film. The language for talking about creators emerges around the same time as the appearance of these key words tied to an interpretive approach. But while "makers" is a fairly straightforward, literal reference to the creator, there were also examples of language use that displayed a more metaphorical understanding of this figure.

An interesting example of this occurs in Thomas Bedding's article "Pictorialism and the Picture" (1910), which attempts to distinguish between the two already-mentioned dominant paradigms that defined much of the criticism from the period, that is, the "moving picture photograph" (film as a recording device) and the "moving picture" (film as a constructed object).[30] For Bedding, the creator of a "moving picture" is someone "imbued with the sentiment of his subject," meaning a person able to understand the subject of the film through the process of feelings, which are then introduced into the image as a sort of truth waiting to be discovered.[31] A second feature of "moving pictures" is that such pictures comply with "the definite laws of composition, balance and all the rest of the elements that go to make up a picture of any kind."[32] This is in "contradistinction," Bedding argues, to photographs, which merely offer impartial recordings of

things, described as “a cartographical transcript of the original.”[33] The third feature of “moving pictures” is that they are noticeably absent of “staginess and theatricality,” tending towards a “naturalistic effect.”[34] To illustrate this idea, Bedding offers a description of D. W. Griffith’s *A Summer Idyll* (1910), highlighting a scene that represents pictorialism, which indeed seems to have triggered his thinking about the idea: “A city man of Bohemian proclivities is rejected by the coquettish woman of his choice. He hikes to the country to forget his sorrow and meets and falls in love with the daughter of a well-to-do farmer. To continue his wooing he seeks and obtains employment on the farm, and *here the photographer shows* us many interesting views of farm life, with Cupid in attendance.”[35]

The use of “photographer” in this context calls our attention for a number of reasons. It was quite rare for critics at the time to make reference to any kind of “causal-figure” (artist, author, creator, etc.) in the context of describing a situation occurring in a film, in the way that today one attributes the appearance of a scene to a director, which constitutes an implicit acknowledgment that the scene is the product of someone’s intentions. It also calls our attention because if one considers that Bedding is describing the film from the vantage point of a viewer watching the scenes unfold, the photographer is not responsible for the appearance of the images that follow at that very moment, whether considered in the present, which is to say, during the screening, or when considered as an entity implicated in the production of the film at a previous point in time. We might consider it a logical use if, say, there was a pan, and therefore a change in framing that occurred as a direct consequence of the photographer’s actions. But since there is a cut in the scene and an ellipse in time, it means the photographer must shift in place and time to arrive at the point where “here the photographer shows us” a new scene (unless the edit took place in the camera, or he was himself the director, which is another story). Eventually, through this process of reasoning, although one tends to see this intuitively, one arrives at the conclusion that the term “photographer,” in this context, does not make sense as a literal statement since the appearance of the scene at that moment is not directly attributable to the photographer, at least in the sense outlined.

Nevertheless, there is a way in which this usage is not entirely incoherent either, at least, it should not strike modern readers as necessarily strange. This is because "photographer" in this passage assumes a metaphorical function, not dissimilar to the way "camera," as Branigan argues, is sometimes used precisely in moments where one attributes a change in scene to *something*, not necessarily a technical apparatus, but rather to a *presence* of some kind, often with human-like traits, such as intentions, which, precisely again, *shows* us images that are presumably presented as meaningful.[36] Like the "camera," the photographer in this passage comes into existence in the process of describing the scene, since, as noted, the photographer is neither present during the screening, nor does the photographer cause the appearance of the images at that moment. Some other process of manipulation has ostensibly taken place, namely editing, between the time the photographer shot the images and the time the sequence was constructed in the manner Bedding describes. Branigan suggests that "the use of the word 'camera' by a spectator shows only that he or she knows a film is a construction that should not be confused with reality."[37] This observation fits with the general line of argument that certain words communicate awareness without necessarily stating this explicitly. What is revealed here in a sense is a "way of talking" about film, but more precisely, a way of talking about the causes of things occurring in films, which requires an intention of some kind to be logically congruent with the idea that these things are meaningful. In fact, the particular scene Bedding highlights is quite meaningful to him because it illustrates (and also seems to be the origins of) his reflection on pictorialism discussed in the same article in which this description appears.

Bedding's example can be contrasted with another example from the period, one which introduces another word that has much the same function (formulated almost in the same way), but which suggests a different kind of awareness of film causes. In the criticism of D.W. Griffith's *A Country Cupid* (1911), the critic uses the term "scenario writer" on three occasions to refer to the cause of a particular event:

> He enters and points the revolver at her; tells her that he intends to shoot her and himself and that both will be found together. It is not until here

> that the scenario writer puts in a scene showing that the hero has the letter from the school teacher making-up after the quarrel. . . .
>
> But, and here again the scenario writer showed wisdom, the idiot has no fear of the revolver and the teacher doesn't want to shoot him. . . .
>
> Here the scenario writer is a little weak; for measuring the time that the hero had to come to the schoolhouse in by the time the idiot spent talking to the teacher, we feel that he wouldn't have got there.[38]

The use of "scenario writer" and "photographer" in these contexts points to contrasting ways of imagining the causes of a particular effect observed on screen – "scenario writer" refers to a cause occurring at an earlier moment in the film production process, while "photographer" refers to an immediate cause which seems to exclude the production process, as if the film was presented at that moment as a live performance. It is important to keep in mind that the types of cause-effect relationships created by film are comparatively more complex than other art forms. For example, the causal relationship between painter and painting or writer and text is easier to grasp than the relationship between filmmaker and film. This is because filmmaking is often a collaborative process that includes several steps and creative influences, among them the writer, cinematographer, editor and director. Secondly, it is a somewhat mystifying process, even for film scholars, making difficult the identification of a clear cause, what one scholar has referred to as the *film being* (that thing to which cause is attributed in a given moment of reflection or description – the camera, the scenario writer, the photographer).[39] Filmmaking involves significant technical knowledge often delegated to experts (we might think today of the special effects department), and an understanding of the various, often overlapping steps, from the pre-production, to production, to post-production. For the casual observer, and even for cinephiles, many of these production procedures remain opaque as an ensemble, and even when clearly understood, there is significant dispute about which pieces have the greatest determining influence in the overall effect. This does not even include what one understands or defines as "film language," the mechanism through which a film produces effects, such as meaning, or emotions. Confronted with such a complex world of interconnected elements and

creative forces, which combine to form the audiovisual film experience, it is understandable that not everyone would conceptualize causation in the same way – "scenario writer" makes sense for one, and "photographer" makes sense for another – and yet in neither case is this necessarily a reflection of an overall awareness of the production process, though it is perhaps a reflection of who the writer believes is the most important cause.[40]

Regions of Self Consciousness

In addition to these various levels of film awareness, early film publication writers displayed significant self awareness including their identity as writers and thinkers, the place they occupied in relation to the public, exhibition and film, and their language used for the purposes of defining and making sense of film. Such awareness is evident in three distinct regions of discourse and activity. The first can be characterized as a metacritical discourse on film criticism. Starting in 1909, critics turned their attention to the emerging practice of writing about film, which continued as a topic of discussion for the years to follow.[41] In their articles, the logic, purpose and nature of the criticism and, most interestingly, the obstacles encountered as writers, are explained. W. Stephen Bush's "Advertising and Criticising" directly addressed the question of objectivity raised by the fact that film producers advertised in the very journals in which their films received criticism, warning "if producers of films are under the impression that liberal use of advertising columns will in any way influence the criticisms of this paper, they are harbouring a misconception."[42] Maintaining independence from the interests of the industry was important because, as Bush explained in another article, "to attain its highest usefulness criticism must point out ethical errors," such as the making of "sectarian pictures" or attempts by "producers of one nationality to portray either the social life or the history of another nationality."[43] However, despite such calls for the utility of criticism, there was significant uncertainty about the precise means through which criticism was to effect change, especially considering that film was both a fixed and easily

replaced object compared to other forms of entertainment. As one frustrated film critic noted: “Perhaps the film critic of a metropolitan paper will never be able to work as much havoc in the picture trade as he has done before in the theatrical line. By this edict the dramatic critic has done, or undone in the past, many productions costing thousands of dollars.”[44] It was on such grounds that *Motography* announced the closure of its film criticism department, concluding “criticism of a film after that film has been released, or at best just before it is released, can by no possible means help that particular subject.”[45] Although most critics understood that the effect of film criticism occurred over time, by affecting the production of future films, it was Louis Reeves Harrison who first clearly articulated another definition of criticism, which remains today one of its primary and more specialized functions.

Over a series of articles, “Mr. Critic” (1911), “The Art of Criticism” (1914), and “Reviewing Photoplays” (1914), Harrison argued in favor of a more interpretive approach to film criticism, which included discovering a film’s “vital meaning.”[46] The turn represented a radical change in orientation. In the first years of trade journal criticism, between roughly 1907 and 1910, critics placed a strong emphasis on representing public opinion, which obviously supported a prescriptive approach.[47] The film industry had a vested interest in responding to public preferences and in this regard took critics seriously. Harrison challenged this imperative, arguing that “it is no longer necessary to consider the audience.”[48] Instead, he envisioned a more personal, impressionistic criticism that emphasized “the discovery of a true spiritual element in the story.”[49] This was a significant public statement, especially coming from a critic writing in a trade journal whose main function was ostensibly to evaluate the commercial viability of films. In any case, Harrison was on safe ground at this point. The turn toward interpretation, which began in earnest around 1910, may have been precipitated by Harrison himself, although we cannot know for sure since most critics published reviews anonymously.

Of course, not everyone expressed agreement with Harrison’s views on film criticism. Their expressions not only give us valuable insight into the way critics at the time imagined the practice of writing about film, but also

insight into the significant awareness critics had of each other. In one especially salient example, a writer from *Film Reports* actually quoted a review from another journal (*Moving Picture World*), calling the author "an amusing instance of a useless critic."[50] The reasons he offers for holding such an opinion tell a revealing story about the situation of film criticism around 1910. On the surface, the case is clear-cut: the *Film Reports* writer is bothered by the fact the review makes reference neither to the production quality of the film nor to whether an audience might actually *enjoy* the film. An exhibitor, the writer notes, would not find such a review useful (which was one of the explicit functions of reviews). The review focuses instead on the potentially dangerous message of a particular scene – a duel – described as representing "an exaggerated notion of honor."[51] The fact the film is French (*Entre le devoir et l'honneur* [*Between Duty and Honor*], Éclair, 1910) has an obvious impact on the reviewer's opinion. When he writes "such pictures have little meaning in this country" it is presented more as advice to American readers than as an objective observation.[52] Nevertheless, the reviewer is satisfied that the message of the film will do "comparatively little harm"; since both men are killed, "the glamor of the bravado which goes with a duel" is "destroyed."[53]

The critique of the review reveals the rules governing early film criticism and the inherent tension Harrison identified, that is, references to the commercial viability of films and to audience appreciation were the essential functions of criticism; the meaning or messages of films much less so. The fact such distinctions were so clearly apparent in 1910 is a strong indication of the self consciousness of critics. But the truly fascinating aspect of the *Film Reports* criticism of the *Moving Picture World* review lies elsewhere. What most annoyed the writer, and the likely source of the scathing tone, is that the reviewer was seen as getting the interpretation of the duel wrong: "Some people, however, like to see a duel represented, and disagree with the critic as to the merits of the custom. As a matter of fact, a view of a real French duel is interesting as a study of foreign customs."[54] Leaving aside that the *Film Reports* writer sees the duel in a fiction film as "real" (which tells us something about the writer's film and cultural awareness); and leaving aside that both seem to be arguing about

categorically different things (the reviewer is commenting on the message of the duel, whereas the *Film Reports* writer is more interested in its educational value), the intrigue lies in what is disclosed as institutional activity: the public criticism of the opinion of another critic on the meaning or value of a particular scene in a film. There are many examples of critics of the time having different opinions about the same film, and several examples of critics referring to one another, but it is very likely this is the only example of a writer from the period actually citing the entirety of a review and engaging in this type of detailed analytical attention.

While these articles engaged in a fairly open debate about the sometimes noble purposes of film criticism, there was obviously an underlying economic imperative of affirming the value of criticism, and especially of film critics, who stood to gain more stability by engaging in a type of discourse that required expertise, and which gradually served as a founding premise for the institutionalization of film studies (becoming a building block of academic discourse, as scholars like Bordwell have identified).[55] Finally, it should be noted that these writers referred to their practice as *film criticism* and to themselves as *film critics*, details sometimes omitted by scholars who have implicitly denied these critics the type of self awareness illustrated in these texts, often through a form of labeling the critics "reporters" or their texts "plot summaries".[56]

The second region of self awareness emerges from the critics' practice of studying audience reception, which not only seems substantially to change the form of film criticism in these years, but also the way the writers conceived of themselves in relation to film, context and audience. As representatives of public opinion, critics were initially expected to survey audience reception and to accurately report responses, but in doing so, the task proved more complicated than imagined. As one critic wrote, "it is extremely difficult for experienced critics to tell what those in front think of this or that presentation."[57] This difficulty may have been partially the result of narrative cinema becoming a more absorbing experience, and films being exhibited in more upscale theaters as opposed to the rowdier nickelodeons.[58] Along the same lines, another *Moving Picture World* article attributed it to the internalization of reactions, noting that the

audience was “in a more thoughtful mood, and their enjoyment and appreciation cannot be translated into applause.”[59] Moreover, not only were gestures of appreciation changing, but sometimes the same film produced radically divergent reactions, something which awakened critics to the complex reality of film exhibition. The following excerpt displays the level of attention critics exercised during exhibitions, almost performing the role of a researcher controlling the variables to ensure the conclusion – that audience reaction was unpredictable – was valid: “In illustration of this I may cite a peculiar instance, rarely found, of two plays by the same author, performed by the same company under the same director, and both favourably reported by the critics. The first was received in silence and evoked faint applause. The second awakened enthusiasm from the outset and an unusual demonstration at the end. The natural conclusion was that one was partially successful, while the other met with emphatic approval, yet careful inquiry among members of the audience discovered widespread preference for the unapplauded piece.”[60]

Thus, the notion of an accessible spectator who could be easily understood and described clashed with the data discovered in the field. In fact, awareness of the reception context extended beyond just realizing that audience reaction, once internalized, could no longer be investigated, other than through interviews, as Harrison remarks. It also included realizing that film reception was partially determined by the context and by the order in which the film was presented in the program: “Where vaudeville is interspersed with the pictures, the act preceding a picture has an effect on its reception. If it was a good act and applauded, the picture following may suffer by comparison. Just as frequently the contrary is the case.”[61] Furthermore, it included understanding that repeated viewing of the same film in diverse contexts produced a distinctive type of film experience, thus “[the critic] often finds it impossible to agree with himself after seeing a picture again under different circumstances.”[62]

These experiences in the field impacted film criticism in various ways. Understandably, references to audience reactions became less frequent in the criticism. Consequently, the opinions of critics, grounded in personal impressions, were emphasized. Additionally, the two main reasons for

pursuing film criticism, informing exhibitors about the entertainment value of films (which depended on understanding the audience) and prescribing changes to filmmaking practices (which required having a grasp of whether the film was good or bad, something these multiple viewings and contexts confounded), encountered some logistical difficulties. These circumstances explain, to some degree, the turn towards criticism (illustrated in the previous section) that combined an interpretive approach with an awareness of the audience, although not attempting to represent audience opinions. Significantly, it also turned critics' attention towards themselves as the source of justification for offering criticism. In short, awareness of film reception affirmed the identity of the critic as a relevant part of the process of determining the way film was going to be thought about.

Finally, there are signs of a third region of self awareness in which some writers commented on the language used for defining cinema, such as when Bedding mentions being "chided" for his use of "uncommon words." It is already common knowledge among film historians that early cinema participants used a multitude of terms to designate "film" (or aspects of film), some derived from the technology involved in the recording of the images (for example, "kinematograph," "motography"), others derived from the motion picture effect ("moving pictures," "animated pictures," "motion pictures"). All seemed to have been used at one point in journal titles. As narrative films became more important, one of the first consciously created terms to gain currency was "photoplay,"[63] although it never managed to replace other terms, only adding to the array of already existing designations. G. Dureau, who noted that the abundance of film terminology was contributing to a situation where "we don't understand ourselves," argued the point, initially, from a commercial perspective, writing "the words that express these things are today insufficient to cover the necessities of commercial relations . . . we do not even know how to name correctly the instruments, the vital mechanical parts of the apparatus of motography."[64] Particularly interesting is that, in addition to arguing for the implementation of a universal, cross-cultural vocabulary, the article is an English translation of someone making all these points in his native French language, highlighting more precisely the different ways of conceptualizing aspects of film, something which has remained true

between French and English to this day. One thinks of "*gros plan*" (large shot) and "close-up," which are two different ways of conceptualizing the same basic element of film, one from the point of view of the size of the image, and the other from the proximity of the camera to the object. Thus, many French terms do not necessarily find equivalents in the English translation, creating a kind of "third language" of mistranslated terms (a genre of discourse in itself). In lamenting the number of terms for "film," Dureau remarks: "The purchasers of 'films'. . . employ without distinction the most varied expressions. . . . 'Have you any pellicles [sic] for sale?' or 'strips of pictures,' or 'reels,' or 'tableau ribbons,' etc."[65] All of these are literal translations of the French terms. Dureau especially takes issue with the "incoherence" of the professional titles of "workers in motography," such as calling the "projector" (by which he means the photographer) an "operator" (the French term for "taker of views"), a situation he found "both ridiculous and barbarous."[66]

Other writers similarly turned their attention to language, either in an attempt to clarify the meaning of a particular term, or to understand the object of cinema on the basis of analyzing the existing words for talking about it. As noted, this was the case with Hulfish in "Art in Moving Pictures" who, on the basis of examining the dictionary definition of the word "art" in relation to film, came to understand something about what made cinema specific, such as its almost magical ability to transport audiences: "The motion camera is the audience, and the audience, therefore, may be taken by the artist into any viewpoint, at any distance from cities or civilization."[67] We might define this tendency as a "pragmatic" element in early film discourse, which gradually concerns itself more with aesthetic terms, and which is extremely valuable for historians interested in understanding the meaning of language at very particular historical junctures and contexts – something which normally would have to be reconstructed, especially with ambiguous terms like "art" that varied significantly in meaning. Hulfish's own reflection on the word "art" in relation to cinema was prompted precisely because of his attention to-language, noting that it was a term "used from time to time" in relation to film. This is an intriguing statement because we have very few documents today that demonstrate Hulfish's observation. Thus, Hulfish's attention to

the language use offers us an entrance point toward describing a language reality that remains, to a significant degree, invisible to us, other than through these types of observations.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to establish a different approach toward thinking about early film publications. There has been a tendency to think of these journals, especially because of their status as "trade" publications, as adopting a particular set of commercially motivated concerns, conventions, and approaches to film. In this scenario, criticism is often seen as consisting of summaries and critics as fairly passive reporters. Trade publications generate less excitement than, let us say, coming across the oft-cited works of Ricciotto Canudo.[68] While this is indeed a productive interpretive framework, the fact these early journals consist of a *collectivity* of individuals, who produce *regular* comments, *extending* over a period of many years, and which display a *diverse* use of language, means the journals constitute a body of evidence for studying a "movement of consciousness."[69] In such an interpretive framework, *everything* appearing in a journal – not just the more attractive components, such as articles – is a potential sign indicating a conscious process. An explanation, comment, or even the use of a single word in one journal will enable us to understand the logic for using a particular way of thinking or approach in another. In looking at these texts together, in seeing them as representing a social world or institution, we gain a sense of a consciousness emerging alongside of film. Significantly, assertions about this consciousness are justified through a substantial set of material evidence. Far too often, references are made to "experiences" in early cinema that stand on comparatively little evidence: the first-hand report of a witness at a screening (the critic or reporter) or a single piece of text that provides one data point, one individual's experience, but from which an explanation of public reception is derived. In these journals we have literally hundreds of thousands of data points that can be traced, all of which are functions of "film experience," and which

when contextualized and interpreted offer a picture of an exciting "collective experience."

In the preceding analyses of this "movement of consciousness" I have focused attention on the film consciousness and self consciousness that begins to emerge in early film publications. I have identified the ways writers formulated a language and practice for understanding film. Collectively, their activities and publications show two broad trends: One was a process of becoming aware that film was an aesthetic, constructed object that contained implicit meaning, likely placed there by a (film) creator. The other was self awareness, an understanding of the role of the critic and of the trade press institution in the construction of the object of cinema. It is in their language that the conceptual transformation of cinema takes place, not just in the material, industrial changes occurring at the level of film production. The early publications produced a semantic field of possibilities, words invented, applied, used and sometimes discarded in a multitude of arrangements and contexts, from which theoretical possibilities and inferences about cinema emerged. Any theorizing about film depends, above all, on an existing vocabulary, an existing language, with concomitant conceptual possibilities that can be used as either references, building blocks or analytical tools. It would be accurate to suggest that in these journals can be found the advent of film theory and film study since, even though direct lines of cause and effect may not be visible, the multitude of terms and ways of talking about film entered the public domain through them, even if never fully acknowledged or referenced.

Notes

1 Thanks to Nicolas Dulac, Louis Pelletier, and Alan Mason for their comments on this chapter.

2 Henry V. Hopwood, *Living Pictures: Their History, Photo-Production, and Practical Working* (1899; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1970), 187.

3 G. Dureau, "The Moving Picture Babel," *Nickelodeon* 3, no. 6 (March 15, 1910): 35.

4 These texts can be thought of as precursors to film trailers, since the goal was to represent the story in the most persuasive and exciting form

possible, often including information not present in the actual films. André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion have defined them as "novelizations" of films. "Les catalogues des premiers fabricants de vues animées: une première forme de novellisation?," *La novellisation. Du film au livre / Novelization from Film to Novel*, eds. Jan Baetens and Marc Lits (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 41–59.

5 Stanley Kauffmann published one of these catalogue descriptions in his anthology on early American film criticism (of D. W. Griffith's *The Adventures of Dollie*) as an example of early film reviews, noting: "Here is a review of [Griffith's] first film, *nothing more than a synopsis* but included here because, unknowingly, it is a milestone in world cultural history." My emphasis. Stanley Kauffmann, with Bruce Henstell, eds., *American Film Criticism, from the Beginnings to Citizen Kane: Reviews of Significant Films at the Time They First Appeared* (New York: Liveright, 1972), 6. Terms like "synopsis," "descriptions," and "summaries" have been applied on occasion to describe early film criticism, perhaps in part because of an inclusion of such texts into the category.

6 Several types of observations potentially display awareness of film as a constructed object. For example, noticing that discrete aesthetic elements – such as photography, setting, editing, lighting, acting and story – form part of a unified design; recognizing that such elements are purposely selected by the author (or artist) as opposed to being arbitrary; observing that images (and sounds) are aesthetically pleasurable and follow similar compositional rules as other art forms (such as painting or theater); believing the film is created and invested with powerful feelings that convey important cultural values, including transcendent notions like "truth," "goodness" and "beauty"; and finally, that films may conceal deeper meanings not necessarily accessible to the general public (thus necessitating explanation from specialized critics).

7 In discussing Wittgenstein, Edward Branigan notes: "The purpose of aesthetic descriptions is to draw attention to specific features . . . rather than to explain the features." In *Projecting a Camera: Language-Games in Film Theory* (London: Routledge, 2006), 322, fn. 69.

8 David S. Hulfish, "Art in Moving Pictures," *Nickelodeon* 1, no. 5 (May 1909): 139–40.

9 Francesco Casetti, *Eye of the Century: Film, Experience, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Casetti discusses five types of film gazes that arise in the interaction between spectator and film: "partial," "composite," "penetrating," "excited," and "immersive." These gazes collectively enable individuals to negotiate the paradoxical experiences of modernity.

10 The concept of "linguistic relativity" has been explored in various ways by such authors as George Lakoff, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Richard Rorty, and more recently in film studies, Edward Branigan. As opposed to seeing language as a transparent reflection of either thoughts or reality, these authors strongly consider the role language plays in determining our attitudes, actions, thoughts, and relationship with reality. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (1953; repr., Oxford: Blackwell, 1967); Richard Rorty, "Inquiry as Recontextualization: An Anti-dualist Account of Interpretation," in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 93–110; Edward Branigan, *Projecting a Camera: Language-Games in Film Theory* (London: Routledge, 2006).

11 See, for example, François Albera's chapter in this book, "First Discourses on Film and the Construction of a 'Cinematic Episteme'."

12 "I want to say: it is characteristic of our language that the foundation on which it grows consists in steady forms of life, regular activity. Its function is determined *above all* by the action it accompanies." Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Cause and Effect: Intuitive Awareness," ed. Rush Rhees, trans. Peter Winch, *Philosophia* 6, nos. 3–4 (1976): 404.

13 Renamed *Film Index* in September 1908 and acquired by *Moving Picture World* in June 1911. See Annette D'Agostino, *Filmmakers in the Moving Picture World: An Index of Articles, 1907–1927* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1997), 13.

14 Renamed *Motography* on August 1, 1910.

15 *New York Dramatic Mirror* started publishing film criticism on May 30, 1908; *Variety* opened a section on January 19, 1907 but discontinued it between March 1911 and January 1913; *Moving Picture World* started publishing criticism under the heading of “Comments on the Film Subjects” on October 10, 1908. *Moving Picture World* is among the most prolific American trade journals in terms of quantity of articles and criticism on film and is one of the reasons it is cited often among early film trade journals.

16 Frank Woods, in the November 27, 1909 edition of the *New York Dramatic Mirror*: “The *Mirror*, at any rate, is published not alone for managers and the profession but also for the great element of the public which desires authoritative information” (quoted in Kauffmann, *American Film Criticism*, 38). Other evidence suggests journals served as guides for understanding films, demonstrating their influence on reception: “we have amongst our readers a very considerable number of the general public . . . we have been told that a visitor to a theatre has actually taken a copy of the *Moving Picture World* with him or her and endeavoured to follow the film by the story.” “The Stories of the Films,” *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 14 (April 2, 1910): 502.

17 Many works cover this period of transition, but perhaps the most extensive and detailed analyses of the relationship between trade publications and the film industry during these years are: Charlie Keil, *Early American Cinema in Transition: Story, Style, and Filmmaking, 1907–1913* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001); and Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), especially pages 80–7 which provide a history of trade publications and a sense of their biases. Although focusing on daily print, Jan Olsson emphasizes the value of concentrating on film journalism as “a discursive domain calling for analysis as a phenomenon in its own right status apart from being yet - another trove of source material added to the panoply of paper sources otherwise mobilized by film historians for fleshing out film culture.” See Jan Olsson, *Los Angeles before Hollywood: Journalism and American Film Culture, 1905 to 1915* (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2008), 18.

18 An impassioned editorial from 1911 calls on critics to "educate the public into the acceptance of the good, the artistic and the beautiful [in films]." "The Lay Press and the Picture," *Moving Picture World* 8, no. 2 (January 14, 1911): 60.

19 Richard Abel indicates the circulation of the *Moving Picture World* "reportedly had reached 15,000" by 1914. "*Moving Picture World*," in *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 647.

20 "Comments on the Film Subjects," *Moving Picture World* 3, no. 15 (October 10, 1908): 279. My emphasis.

21 Louis Reeves Harrison, "The Elusive Quality," *Moving Picture World* 7, no. 8 (August 20, 1910): 398; "Photodrama and the Child," *Moving Picture World* (July 27, 1912): 322; and "Realism," *Moving Picture World* 18, no. 10 (December 6, 1913): 1125; Jay Gove, "Photoplay Realism: An Optimistic View," *Moving Picture World* 8, no. 13 (July 8, 1911): 1556–7; W. Stephen Bush, "New Functions of the Motion Picture," *Moving Picture World* 13, no. 1 (July 6, 1912): 21; "Problems in Pictures," *Moving Picture World* 10, no. 11 (December 16, 1911): 877; and "The Compelling Harmony of the Whole," *Moving Picture World* 9, no. 2 (July 22, 1911): 103; Hulfish, "Art in Moving Pictures."

22 Thomas Bedding, "Pictorialism and the Picture," *Moving Picture World* 7, no. 11 (September 10, 1910): 566–7.

23 Thomas Bedding, "The Sentiment of the Moving Picture," *Moving Picture World* 7, no. 10 (September 3, 1910): 509.

24 Hulfish, "Art in Moving Pictures," 139. My emphasis.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 140.

27 "I believe that a 'theory of film' may be thought of as the *grammar of an ensemble of words*, such as frame, shot, camera, point of view, editing, style, realism, auteur, performance, spectatorship, and medium specificity, accompanied by selected radial extensions of these words. I believe that a film theory is not simply a set of objective propositions about film, because "film" – that is, the grammar (the vocabulary) of the words that described film – is not fixed, but is tied to culture, value and a consensus about, for example, the present boundaries of the medium (i.e., the

properties we select that presently interest us relating to the materials of the medium) as well as the present ideas that are used to ‘clarify our experience of film’.” Branigan, *Projecting a Camera*, 115–16.

28 Taken from a number of reviews from 1909–10, including the one quoted below.

29 *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 3 (January 22, 1910): 91.

30 Bedding, “Pictorialism and the Picture.”

31 Ibid., 566.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., 567.

36 Branigan quotes Dudley Andrew’s analysis of F. W. Murnau’s *Sunrise* (1927) to illustrate how “camera” is employed as having human-like agency and intentions: “Later, the man, back to us, wanders toward the marsh, and the camera, full of our desire, initiates one of the most complex and thrilling movements in all of cinema.” Another example, this time from Kaja Silverman and Harun Farocki’s comments on Godard’s *Le mépris* (*Contempt*, 1963): “The camera seems to want to show us how distant it is from him [Paul], in every sense of the word.” Branigan, *Projecting a Camera*, 59, 83.

37 Ibid., 93.

38 *Moving Picture World* 13, no. 15 (August 12, 1911): 375.

39 “Film being is a general term for what we understand to be the origin(ator) of the images and sounds we experience. Who or what provides the images that we see? Why do we see this character, at this moment, from this angle.” Daniel Frampton, *Filmosophy* (London: Wallflower, 2006), 27.

40 Thomas Bedding was editor of the *British Journal of Photography* in the 1890s. See Stephen Bottomore, “Bedding, Thomas G.,” in Abel, *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, 88. The other critic is anonymous.

41 In addition to the articles of this category mentioned below, the following are examples of this tendency: “The Press and the Moving Picture,” *Moving Picture World* 4, no. 12 (March 20, 1909): 325; “The

Press and the Picture," *Moving Picture World* 7, no. 20 (November 12, 1910): 1124; "The Critic," *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 2 (January 15, 1910): 48; "Film Criticism in the Lay Press," *Moving Picture World* 9, no. 20 (May 20, 1911): 1113; W. Stephen Bush, "Suggestions to a Worried Critic," *Moving Picture World* 10, no. 10 (December 9, 1911).

42 W. Stephen Bush, "Advertising and Criticising," *Moving Picture World* 14, no. 8 (November 23, 1912): 750. See also Louis Reeves Harrison, "Advertising, Boosting and Criticism," *Moving Picture World* 15, no. 14 (March 29, 1913): 1313. These articles were also a means of affirming the status of trade publications, as *The New York Dramatic Mirror* illustrates: "But most important . . . is the policy *The Mirror* has adopted, of impartially criticising new films as they are presented to the public." "Reviews of Films Commended: 'The Mirror' is Complimented for its Impartial Criticisms – Improvement in Film Advocated," *New York Dramatic Mirror* 59, no. 1540 (June 27, 1908): 7. Frank Woods, under the pseudonym "Spectator," regularly raised this issue in his columns "Spectator's Comments," for example, vol. 61, no. 1586 (May 15, 1909): 15.

43 W. Stephen Bush, "Critic, Producer and Exhibitor," *Moving Picture World* 14, no. 7 (November 17, 1912): 637.

44 "Film Criticism in the Lay Press," *Moving Picture World* 8, no. 18 (May 20, 1911): 1113.

45 "Film Criticism," *Motography* (August 1911): 56, repr. in Anthony Slide, ed., *Selected Film Criticism 1896–1911* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press), 116.

46 Louis Reeves Harrison, "The Art of Criticism," *Moving Picture World* 19, no. 5 (January 30, 1914): 521. See also "Mr. Critic," *Moving Picture World* 10, no. 4 (October 28, 1911): 274, and "Reviewing Photoplays," *Moving Picture World* 22, no. 13 (December 19, 1914): 1652.

47 "In many instances the critics seek to establish their impressions as those of the audience about them." "Film and Critics," *Film Reports* (October 1, 1910): 8, repr. in Slide, *Selected Film Criticism*, 115. Another example: "In defence of the critiques we say that they must be taken as an expression of public opinion." "Comments on Film Subjects," *Moving Picture World* 3, no. 15 (October 10, 1908): 279. *Nickelodeon* was perhaps

most adamant on this point: “There is but one true test of any moving picture. If it pleases the public, it is an unqualified success. It matters not whether the subject be comic, dramatic, or educational.” “Criticising Moving Pictures,” *Nickelodeon* 2, no. 4 (October 1909): 103.

48 Harrison, “Reviewing Photoplays,” 1652.

49 Ibid.

50 “Film and Critics,” 115.

51 Quoted in “Film and Critics,” 115.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., 116.

55 David Bordwell, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

56 Myron Osborn Lounsbury, *The Origins of American Film Criticism, 1909–1939* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 3.

57 Louis Reeves Harrison, “The Highbrow,” *Moving Picture World* 9, no. 10 (September 16, 1911): 775.

58 “A picture that is received in stony silence at one theatre is very often applauded in another. There are many reasons for this. The temperament and mental calibre vary with different localities.” “Commenting on the Films,” *Moving Picture World* 8, no. 15 (April 15, 1911): 814.

59 “The Picture the Audience Likes,” *Moving Picture World* 8, no. 6 (February 11, 1911): 310.

60 Harrison, “The Highbrow,” 775.

61 “Commenting on the Films,” 814.

62 Ibid.

63 In “There Is Everything in a Name: What the Essanay Contest Means,” *Moving Picture World* encouraged the selection of a name that was going to be “clean, good, ennobling […] and if possible, universally understood.” *Moving Picture World* remained convinced that “the very life of a business [was] going to be helped or prejudiced by the result.” *Moving Picture World* 7, no. 8 (August 20, 1910): 400. See also “The New Name, Photoplay,” *Moving Picture World* 7, no. 17 (October 22, 1910): 933.

64 Dureau, “Moving Picture Babel,” 35.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Hulfish, “Art in Moving Pictures,” 139. The dictionary he cites is *A Standard Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1905). There are other examples of this type of attention to words, such as Bedding’s early quote regarding being chided for his use of uncommon words.
68 Especially his 1911 “The Birth of a Sixth Art,” in *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology 1907–1939*, ed. Richard Abel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993): 58–66.
69 Nigel Rapport and Joanna Overing define this concept as follows: “Consciousness comes to know itself in and through the movement between different points of view in time and space.” *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 72.

12

Early Cinema and Film Theory

Roger Odin

> *One of the important properties of afield is that it implicitly defines "unthinkable" things, things that are not even discussed. There's orthodoxy and heterodoxy, but there is also doxa, everything that goes without saying, and in particular the systems of classification determining what is judged interesting or uninteresting.*
>
> (Pierre Bourdieu)[1]

The interest film scholars have shown in early cinema over the past thirty years and more is the direct result of the return to film history that has animated film studies since the Brighton Congress of 1978. As we all know, this movement has been marked by a desire to go beyond the approximations of the first written film histories by means of direct recourse to the films themselves; systematic archival work; the establishment or reestablishment of facts, dates, and the chronology of events; the preparation of long-awaited accurate and precise filmographies; the compiling of company catalogues (Pathé, Gaumont); and the use of sources that in earlier times were seen as secondary (trade journals, posters, patents, paper prints, etc.): in short, through recourse to historical method and the indispensable inventories it creates. But what do these foundational empirical studies have to do with film theory? In this chapter, I wish to demonstrate that research into early cinema not only has had but continues to have extremely important consequences for theoretical enquiry.

There is, first of all, the unique status of early cinema as such – what André Gaudreault calls its "troubling alien quality"[2] – which, by forcing theoretical enquiry to shift its concerns, to break out of the box in which it has been shut up, has given rise to an extremely stimulating situation.

There is in addition the context in which this historical research has developed and in particular the fact that it comes after an intense theoretical phase. No one today can disregard the importance of theory, even if their aim is to call into question the dominant theory of the day. Many historical studies of the early cinema period, moreover, are the work of film theorists. The result can be seen in the growing number of declarations highlighting what Melanie Nash describes as the "growing reciprocity of cinema historiography and film theory."[3] Or, as André Gaudreault puts it, "[t]heory is the oxygen any form of history requires, while history has the same function for theory."[4]

Things get complicated, however, because one can't simply place theory and history side by side, even with a view to having them work together. There exists a *theory of history* which is not *film theory*. It is clear that Rick Altman's purpose, for example, in his study of early film sound technology in his volume *Silent Film Sound*,[5] is basically to found a new theory of history, one he proposes we call "crisis historiography": his idea is that new technologies are subject to intermedial influences (cultural, institutional, technological, etc.) which provoke *identity crises* and compel them to move in certain directions, sometimes giving rise to ruptures. Altman explicitly makes the claim that this theory could be applied to objects of study other than film. On the other hand, when Alain Boillat, in his volume *Du bonimenteur à la voix-over. Voix attraction et voix narration au cinéma*,[6] examines the same technology in order to better understand how its elements (the lecturer, the projection apparatus, various sound systems and methods of placing sound in the film, the film itself, the viewer) *communicate*, we are in the realm of film theory.

This latter approach is the one I will adopt here, even though, as we shall see, it is impossible not to take into account the former approach. I should also point out that my goal is not to provide an overview of the relationship between early cinema and film theory (the space allotted to me here would not permit this) but to describe the general directions in which research is headed, the logic behind them, the paths of enquiry that have been opened (some having been followed, others not), and the problems encountered. The reader will thus not be surprised, I hope, to see that I draw on a

relatively small number of examples – most often from French (or at least Francophone) film theory, because this is undoubtedly not as well known as Anglo-American theory by the readers of the present volume, and because of the exceptional historical role played by some French-speaking scholars, André Gaudreault in particular.

I will demonstrate that work on early cinema has contributed to bringing to the forefront of film theory a number of topics which have led to a reexamination of certain theoretical concepts and even to the proposal of new ones. These studies have also contributed in their own manner to a paradigmatic shift and epistemological break whose effects are continuing to be felt in the theoretical field.

Topical Contributions

The specific features of early cinema have contributed to putting certain topics center-stage in film theory. Most often, these topics were already present, but early cinema has reactivated them in its own way. Some examples would be the discussion of *modernity*,[7] that of the *viewer* (I will return to this below) and that of *technology*, which I mentioned above with respect to the work of Altman and Boillat. Curiously, this latter topic is often addressed in connection with another topic we wouldn't expect to see raised with respect to a period we readily call "silent": sound (Altman's and Boillat's work, as I pointed out, takes up this dual topic of sound technology).

But if there is a topic we might describe as having truly been launched by the study of early cinema, it is that of speech or, more precisely, of *orality*. In his opening comments in a special issue of the journal *Iris* devoted to this topic, Francis Vanoye made the following curious remark: "What struck me in the course of the always long and delicate operation of coordinating a special issue of a journal was the difficulty I encountered, for this issue of *Iris* devoted to speech in film, in bringing together articles, precisely, on speech."[8] We can't better express the difficulty of representing the state of research in the field at the time. Work on the topic since then, by authors such as Michel Chion, Jean Châteauvert, Sarah Kozloff, and Alain

Masson,[9] addresses mostly dialogue and voice-over: recorded speech. In the case of early cinema, what calls out to be studied is “live” speech.

It all began with a patient historical research project which showed that the film lecturer was almost universally present during the early cinema period, even though this phenomenon had gone practically unnoticed in traditional film histories. This discovery, apart from the fact that it brought out the limits of analysis founded exclusively on the film image, overlooking the structuring role played by the lecturer, set in motion a series of consequences for theories of cinematic speech and more broadly for film theory as a whole.

With respect to speech, this discovery showed the need for an approach that would take into account not only its discursive or material aspect – what takes place on the material level of expression: the intonation, rhythm, accent, and grain of the voice – but the *performance* through which these are expressed (the lecturer’s physique, the way in which he communicates as much through his body as through his voice) and the setting in which it took place. In short, it revealed the need to go beyond the study of speech to the study of *orality*.

As a result, film theorists have become interested in work which film theory had not concerned itself with before now: everything that is being done around the theory of orality. Germain Lacasse, in his foundational volume *Le bonimenteur de vues animées. Le cinéma “muet” entre tradition et modernité*, takes up the work of a leading theorist of orality, Paul Zumthor, to examine the function of the film lecturer. In particular, he insists on the lecturer’s role as a “resistant” (this word recurs throughout the volume): opposed to cinema’s homogenization, the defender of a “local and collective temporality as opposed to the universal and linear temporality propagated by institutional cinema,”[10] the defender of national culture and its peculiarities against uniformity, and a stalwart against cultural hegemony, especially American.

The most important consequence of this discovery, however, concerns theories of *énonciation*. Basing his analyses on research conducted by linguists on oral communication, Lacasse demonstrates that the until-now dominant conception of enunciation in film theory – the reflexive and

impersonal enunciation found in Christian Metz,[11] in which the signs of enunciation have their origin in the film itself, as opposed to deictic enunciation – cannot be applied to films presented by a lecturer, whose enunciation was clearly individual and deictic (deictics are markers which indicate the context of enunciation). Lecturers constantly used such markers in their performances, both verbal ("*Now* look at the *left-hand* side of the screen") and gestural (pointing out with his finger or wand what he wanted the viewer to look at). Taking up an idea expressed by André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning in their article "Le cinéma des premiers temps, un défi à l'histoire du cinéma?" ("Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History"),[12] Lacasse insists that this deictic enunciation had the effect of keeping the viewer outside the diegetic space[13] (whereas narrative cinema moved toward a form which incorporated the viewer into the diegesis).

All this leads Lacasse to posit the concept "oral cinema," which he first used to describe early cinema. Nevertheless, new historical research saw its field of application rapidly expand. It was discovered, for example, that lecturers not only endured for quite some time, at least in some form, after the arrival of talking films (in Quebec and Japan, for example), but that there are many ways other than the presence of a lecturer for cinema to be tied to orality, both before and after the introduction of talking films. There thus exist forms of oral discourse around the screening of a film apart from that of the lecturer: illustrated scientific lectures (the speech of scholars); travelogues commented on by the person who made them (the speech of travelers); film in schools (the speech of teachers and students); home movies (the speech of family members); etc. Even talking films can be found whose filmic enunciation derives from parameters inherited from an oral context, such as fiction films adapted from radio serials and featuring actors performing "the way they would on the radio" and films constructed like "situational performances" (a concept borrowed from ethnology: characters chosen for the effect they will have on the audience are asked to reenact and recount a past experience, thereby anchoring the story in a specific context; Pierre Perrault's films, for example, belong to this category). To describe this kind of film, Lacasse coined the expression "films whose deixis is semi-oral."[14]

But then Lacasse goes one step further: in an extremely bold theoretical move, he hypothesizes that orality may exist in the enunciative action of the image itself. This, Lacasse explains, is the case in particular of *cinéma direct*:

> *Cinéma direct* is closer to the model of early cinema than to that of a viewer admitted onto the location.… Its deictic system is similar. The moving camera does not seek to bring the viewer onto the location; it seeks, like a lecturer, to show them the location and the characters that the author wishes to show. The discourse of this author is always perceptible. The moving camera is the film lecturer's "now we see" or "look at the middle of the picture" much more than it is a fictional character's "here I am now" or "I'm at the center."[15]

This operation can be found in a variety of places, particularly in African films, Brazilian Cinema Nôvo, and even in certain fiction films. Lacasse gives the example of Pierre Falardeau's films, which are shot in domestic settings with a handheld camera and direct sound. Both these techniques are visible on-screen by means of direct address to the camera by the main character, the use of subtitles to identify characters, the camera operator's off-screen voice, and the clearly subjective style. Here the signs of enunciation do not refer to the film as the center of attention but rather to the filmmaker and his partners, whose enunciative operations are a part of the diegesis. To encompass all of these phenomena, Lacasse proposes the expression "oral film practices."

As we can see, research of this kind is developing well beyond early cinema as a period. Some scholars have thus come to adopt a comparative method, using early cinema to help them better understand what was at play in talking films. In this way Boillat, before beginning his discussion of the voice-over, devotes two chapters to the film lecturer. "In fact I believe," he writes, "that by thinking first about orality one is better equipped on a theoretical level to take up the question of the status of recorded speech in talking cinema."[16] Elsewhere, theoretical debates are beginning to unfold: did the film lecturer always produce distancing with respect to the diegesis? Could he not also be an agent of immersion in it? Doesn't sectioning the lecturer off into a role as "resistant" limit the diversity of possible forms of interaction? Is it possible to apply the concept orality to sound cinema?

More broadly, how are we to describe, on a theoretical level, the different ways in which talking film adapted to orality? Research directions which remain largely unexplored have also been posed: how are we to theorize the verbal interventions of the viewer? How are we to theorize speech in home movies,[17] political films, or educational films (spaces of communication in which we cannot speak of "spectators")? How is orality linked to the varieties of media present in society today: radio, television, the Internet, mobile telephones? (In fact, nothing could be closer to "oral cinema" than a certain deictic and interactive form of film made on mobile telephones.)[18]

In sum, research into early cinema has turned the topic of orality in cinema into an area of historical research and theoretical enquiry in its own right – an identified and active area, with research groups, symposia, publications, internal debates, and the development of a micro-community of scholars. In this area the most empirical historical research drives theoretical reflection, stimulating it with new topics of study and new challenges. Finally, after having resorted to outside tools (theories of orality and linguistic theory), theories of orality in cinema are gradually beginning to produce their own concepts ("oral cinema," "semi-oral deixis," "oral practices," etc.).

It is interesting to note that another strong feature of early cinema, its use of intertitles and thus of writing, has not led to similar discussions. Existing theoretical enquiry into this topic has not developed out of work carried out on early cinema, but from the point of view of filmmaking (studies of scriptwriting and subtitling) or in the domain of film analysis (studies of adaptations and credit sequences). Perhaps such a discussion will come to pass one day, but for that to happen it will be necessary for historical research and theoretical enquiry to ask sufficiently general questions to launch the debate.

Conceptual Contributions

I would now like to show that early cinema has not only enabled the development of new research topics, but that it has played the role of heuristic agent in its posing of certain questions around the conceptual tools

used by film theory. It has even led at times to new conceptual tools being proposed.

One of the first books to have taken this path was André Gaudreault's *Du littéraire au filmique. Système du récit* (*From Plato to Lumière: Narration and Monstration in Literature and Cinema*).[19] Gaudreault's starting point and objectives are clearly theoretical in nature: "the ultimate goal of my research is to identify and define the way, or ways, in which film narrative functions and thus to contribute to the establishment of a narratological theory of the cinema."[20] As part of this enquiry, Gaudreault points out, "a special place will be accorded to what will henceforth be described as 'early cinema'." Nevertheless, he relates, "the strictly cinematic hypotheses I am about to formulate will not be limited to any specific corpus, since they claim to be valid for all film discourse [of all] historical periods."[21] Gaudreault provides several arguments to justify his choice of early cinema to discuss questions of film narrative. I will focus on two of these in my discussion here.

The first, obvious argument is that this moment was "when cinema and narrative first met,"[22] leading him to investigate how the devices of film language developed and what was responsible for their development – in other words, he adopts a *genetic* approach. For example, he connects the shift from single-shot films to multiple-shot films to a discussion of the effects on film language that this shift brought about. At the same time, he devotes an entire chapter (chapter 10) to "The Origins of the Film Narrator." Thus the historical period selected for study shapes the kind of theory constructed.

Gaudreault's second argument is methodological. He emphasizes that early cinema "more easily allows for taking issues one at a time: the primary importance of the image in early cinema makes it possible to study an object that is less complex than sound film." He adds: "It is not unthinkable that the level of confusion apparent in the field of narratology today is a result of the desire on the part of many authors to solve every problem at one blow."[23] In fact all of Gaudreault's theoretical efforts will be directed toward this goal of conceptual clarification.

Let's look at an example of his method. Remarking the polysemy of the word "narrative" found in the work of narratolgists such as Gérard Genette, Jules Bremond, Tzvetan Todorov, and Algirdas-Julien Greimas, one of many signs of the confusion he exposes, Gaudreault puts three films by the Lumière brothers (*La sortie des usines Lumière* [*Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*, 1895], *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat* [*Train Entering a Station*, 1895] and *L'arroseur arrosé* [*Waterer and Watered*, 1895]) to work as a little system which enables him, by comparing them, to create theoretical distinctions.

The first distinction is between *minimum narrative sequence* and *narrative énoncé*. Gaudreault notes that, compared to the first two films, *L'arroseur arrosé* has a powerful narrative effect. He then shows that this film is the only one of the three to meet the requirements of the *minimum narrative sequence*, by containing "a minimum of two transformations" in such a way that the disruption of an initial situation gives rise to the establishment of a new situation.[24] The other two Lumière films provide only examples of narrative *énoncé* (a series of transformations without a precise structure). In short, each of the three films contains narrative elements, but only *L'arroseur arrosé* is a story.

Gaudreault's second distinction is between *narrative on the level of content* and *narrative on the level of expression*. In each of these three films the filing past of photograms at the source of the sense of movement produces a narrative effect on the level of expression itself: in this sense any film could be seen as narrative. But here too *L'arroseur arrosé* stands apart from the other two films: it introduces, on top of expressive narrativity, narrative structures on the level of *content*. It tells a story.

The third distinction Gaudreault makes is between *extrinsic* narrativity (the level of content) and *intrinsic* narrativity (the level of expression). The story *L'arroseur arrosé* tells could be told by a different medium: in writing, verbally, as a comic strip, on stage, etc. This kind of narrativity could be called *extrinsic*. Quite different is the narrativity that arises from the filing past of photograms: this is *intrinsic* to the film medium. It is truly the medium which produces the series of transformations.

At this stage of his project, Gaudreault explores the difference between a single-shot film such as *L'arroseur arrosé* and films which employ editing

to tell a story. One thing is certain: both develop a story. But does the word story here refer to the same process in each? And can we speak of *narrative* in each case?

The answer to the first question is surely negative: *L'arroseur arrosé* certainly tells a story, but only on the level of content (on the extrinsic level). It carries out no narrative *structuring* on the intrinsic level (the level of expression), even though it obviously employs the intrinsic narrativity of cinema that arises from the transformations produced by the filing past of photograms. Hence the need to distinguish between *two levels of intrinsic narrativity*: the first is created by this *filing past* and the second by *editing*. Only editing can produce an intrinsic story.

It would be interesting here to remark Gaudreault's hesitations before he arrives at a correct theory of the expressive level of narrative. Some of his remarks suggest that he was tempted to see the shot as a story and to make it the initial structural level. An example is his comment that "[t]he first of these narrative levels corresponds to the micro-narrative communicated by *each shot*, as a photogrammatic *énoncé*. The second, higher narrative level is generated from this first level. It is produced by juxtaposing the *micro-narratives communicated by each shot*."[25] It is clear that this position has been inferred directly out of the early cinema corpus, whose stories were contained in a single shot. This position, however, is not theoretically tenable. He thus proceeds, on this same page, to provide the correct theorization of the phenomenon: the motor of narrative transformation on the first level of expression is the "*process* at the basis of cinema, that of *creating a sequence of photograms*" – or, borrowing Christian Metz's expression, "moving iconic analogy."[26] We see how the pressure exerted by the historical period poses the risk of creating ad hoc concepts; Gaudreault must exert real effort to conceptualize his phenomena. Working on early cinema certainly changes one's "field of vision" and leaves traditional approaches behind, but it also brings the researcher into another field that produces its own theoretical confinement. We shouldn't be surprised; that's how enquiry works – but it is best to be aware of this.

To answer the second question, Gaudreault feels the need to take a detour through the thought of Plato and Aristotle and the concepts *mimetic diegesis* and *non-mimetic diegesis*: *mimetic diegesis* uses characters acting out and

dispenses with a narrator, while *non-mimetic diegesis* employs a narrator to tell the story. He then makes another detour, through the theater this time: the enunciative workings of *L'arroseur arrosé* are close to those of the theater, with its mode of communication "which consists of *showing* characters … who *act out* rather than *tell* the vicissitudes to which they are subjected."[27] Gaudreault thus proposes we distinguish between two modes of telling a story and between two agents responsible for communicating it: on the one hand, *monstration* and the *monstrator*, found in single-shot films and in the filming itself, and on the other *narrative* and the *narrator*, found in multi-shot films and in editing. Note that, unlike what took place in Gaudreault's ideas on narrative levels when he analyzed the differences between three films to arrive at his theoretical conclusions, here the solution was found not only outside early cinema but beyond film itself (in Plato, Aristotle, and theories of the theater). It remains the case, however, that early cinema enabled him to formulate the problem.

Gaudreault's discussion does not stop there, but I have spoken of it enough for my purpose here, which is to illustrate his project of deliberately and explicitly using the structural specificity of early cinema as a heuristic space to advance theoretical reflection.

The use of attraction in film research, although it was introduced in connection with the concept monstration, corresponds to a completely different logic. Here the goal, as Tom Gunning's influential early article makes clear,[28] is to describe early cinema as a *period*. Periodizing is one of the greatest problems in the theory of history – and, as Michèle Lagny points out, not only film history.[29] What is at stake, then, is distinguishing the period of early cinema from the period of institutional cinema. Contrary to traditional film history, which sees history from a teleological perspective, in terms of evolution, early cinema historians have chosen to highlight that history's ruptures. Gaudreault, in his book *Film and Attraction: From Kinematography to Cinema*, even asserts that we should distinguish a radical break between "kine-attractography" and "cinema," going so far as to speak of an "epistemological break."[30] He thus proposes that we substitute the concept "paradigm" for "period," thereby formulating

another conception of film history. This concept “paradigm,” then, is from the outset theoretical in nature.

It remains the case that defining a period and especially positing a “rupture” between two historical moments (the concept “paradigm”) involves, in Lagny’s description, “attributing to these moments a minimum of specific features, which must be identified.”[31] The question then becomes knowing where to look for these specific features. The most common solution in early cinema studies is to look at technological changes: people thus speak of “silent cinema” vs. “talking cinema.” Another solution is to base oneself on evolutionary criteria: here people speak of “primitive cinema.” In *Life to those Shadows*, Noël Burch contrasts “primitive” and “institutional” modes of presentation in a way that suggests that film during this period was still incomplete.[32] The concepts monstration and attraction seek to avoid such negative connotations, combining structural criteria (monstration involves an agent showing something to the viewer) and phenomenological criteria: attraction describes a specific experience (I’m attracted to the show like a magnet). While monstration and attraction are not the same, they are both opposed to institutional cinema. In structural terms, institutional cinema functions through the use of narrative. In terms of experience, it leads to projection and identification: I project myself onto the characters, who draw me into their stories.

As one might expect, the concept attraction has not failed to provoke numerous debates among historians: when does the period of attraction begin and end? Isn’t narrative present in the period of attraction, and vice versa? If this is the case, when was the shift from one dominant paradigm to another? In short, following Charles Musser,[33] shouldn’t we construct a more precise periodization? The problem becomes complicated when we consider that the concept attraction is used to describe at least three phenomena: the attraction produced by the machine “cinema” (I’m fascinated by this machine for creating movement); the attraction produced by the conditions in which a film is screened (lecturers, orchestras, singers, and well-known personalities providing live sound can constitute an attraction); and, finally, the attractions (here I will use the plural) conveyed

by film – attractional elements, in the traditional sense, contained in films (jugglers, magicians, high-wire artists). Highly spectacular images, in other words: natural phenomena, the lives of animals, bull-running, boxing matches, military processions, etc. The question then becomes which one of these senses of the concept attraction we are to employ if we are to periodize history.

Although it is a source of problems for the historian, this hesitation over where to apply the concept – and this is where things become interesting for my purposes here – is what enables the concept to operate as a theoretical tool. For if the concept attraction can be applied to various situations, it becomes possible to disconnect it from its initial period – "its real attraction consists [in] its applicability to other periods of film history," Wanda Strauven remarks[34] – and to use it to describe the *mode* of production of a specific *experience*. In fact, in his very first article on the subject in 1986, Tom Gunning emphasized that "the cinema of attractions does not disappear with the dominance of narrative, but rather goes underground, both into certain avant-garde practices and as a component of narrative films, more evident in some genres (e.g., the musical) than in others."[35] In the same article, he saw the "cinema of effects" of the trio Spielberg–Lucas–Coppola as the heir to the period of attraction. Soon people were seeing attraction pretty much everywhere.[36] One thing is certain: all three phenomena encompassed by the concept are present in recent film history, with its films as attraction (these are legion today); screenings of silent films with piano accompaniment or a very large orchestra (a very fashionable practice these days); and the development of new ways of screening films (IMAX, 3D, home theater, and movies on mobile telephones – because of its small screen, we might say that watching a film on one's telephone is quite an "attractional" experience indeed).

Here then is a concept that has arisen directly out of a debate over the theory of history which has proven in the end to be an excellent tool for theorizing cinema as a whole.

Film Theory Finally in Crisis

This was the title of an issue of the journal *Cinémas*[37] I edited in which I praised crisis as a way of shaking up film theory a little. One might also see in it an echo of the title of an article by Robert Sklar, "Does Film History Need a Crisis?"[38] I wanted to demonstrate that the study of early cinema has, epistemologically, called film theory into question in a number of ways whose effects have still not been measured and from which we have yet to draw conclusions.

The concept apparatus (*dispositif*), it seems to me, lies at the heart of these challenges to film theory. Readers will recall that this concept originated in two famous articles by Jean-Louis Baudry[39] which offered an approach to the film viewer both meta-psychological and ideological. Baudry describes the film viewer as immobile, plunged into darkness and in whom is induced a state of regression and a perspective close to that of a dream. He connects this perspective to a fundamental psychic predisposition, which Frank Kessler describes as being "ontologically inscribed in the medium itself and which govern film practices as a whole."[40] This, however, is a fundamentally ahistorical, or rather trans-historical, outlook.

Scholars of early cinema, on the other hand, quickly realized that the apparatus did not enable them to grasp what took place in the space devoted to "attraction," as Tom Gunning's first article on the topic makes clear. Theorists thus find themselves faced with two situations: either renounce the concept apparatus or try to modify it to make it useful. Despite criticism of it, theorists seem to agree that the concept should be retained. But, as Jean-Pierre Sirois-Trahan puts it in another issue of *Cinémas*, "why would the concept apparatus always be of heuristic value?"[41] His answer is that it can still be of use, particularly for thinking about viewer response. For while real, empirical viewers are difficult to theorize, we can more easily identify viewers created by the apparatus.[42] In this same issue, Frank Kessler also pleads for the concept to be retained but emphasizes that this involves "a fairly radical modification" of its "theoretical aims": what is needed is to leave the realm of the meta-psychology of the viewer "and to situate ourselves in the realm of historical pragmatism."[43] From this point

of view, “the concept’s theoretical productivity” rests above all on “the way in which it tries to link the way in which technology functions, the viewer’s perspective and film form.”[44] Kessler demonstrates that early-film studies have brought to light two apparatuses unlike that described by Baudry: on the one hand, “kinematography as spectacular apparatus,” and on the other “cinema as an apparatus of spectacle”;[45] our amazement shifts from the spectacle of reproducing movement (the machine “cinema”) to the spectacle depicted. Here we return to two of the meanings of the concept attraction.

These enquiries have opened the door to seeing multiple apparatuses during the early cinema period. Multiple exhibition apparatuses, first of all: films are shown in places as varied as fairgrounds, cafés, nickelodeons, lecture halls, theaters, world’s fairs, stores, vaudeville theaters, fairy play performances, etc. And multiple formal apparatuses: some films are in a photographic tradition (animated pictures) and others a theatrical tradition. (Sirois-Trahan shows that certain Méliès films operate on a “trompe l’oeil” principle: they seek to produce the same visual effect as that of a theater stage.)[46] Other films are in a tradition of optical toys, such as the Phenakisticope, the Zoetrope, etc.

Contrary to what is sometimes implied, this diversity did not disappear with the emergence of institutional cinema. Kessler hypothesizes that we might “distinguish several apparatuses throughout film history, each made specific by its historicity.”[47] For example, as I have discussed elsewhere, throughout film history more films have undoubtedly been seen in a family setting, at home, than in the movie theater apparatus.[48] Not only home movies, although they undoubtedly account for a good proportion, but also fiction films. Today the phenomenon has become pervasive: films are watched on television, VHS, DVD, computer screens, etc. But there is nothing new in this: in the 1920s, 9.5 mm non-flammable film stock enabled Pathé to launch its “Cinéma chez soi” (“Film at home”) products. Another example, as Eef Masson points out,[49] is that of educational screenings.

We must therefore convince ourselves that many apparatuses exist, to the point of wondering, alongside Miriam Hansen,[50] whether the classical

cinematic apparatus described by Baudry should not be seen as an exception rather than the rule. Here the change in outlook with respect to traditional film theory is radical indeed.

Nevertheless, we should remark that while this change is radical, it is carried out from within the same framework as that of Baudry's articles: that of the viewer's perspective. This approach has existed for a very long time in film theory – at least since Hugo Münsterberg wrote about the medium in 1916.[51] But, as Tom Gunning remarks, "[i]f we want to continue the challenge film history poses to film theory, we must not only research the film spectator, but the actual cinematic apparatus, and interrogate the meaning and implications of its history."[52]

In fact quite a variety of research is engaged on this path. Examples can be found in the volume *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* mentioned above and in the issue of the journal *Cinémas* edited by Melanie Nash and Jean-Pierre Sirois-Trahan on the topic "Dispositif(s) du cinéma (des premiers temps)," which contains articles by Alison Griffiths on the panorama, Tom Gunning on phantasmagoria, Dan Streible on children and the Mutoscope, etc.[53] We should note that apparatus as the concept underlying this work does not originate in film theory but in the work of Michel Foucault, and that unlike the reception given to Baudry's use of the term Foucault's concept has never been called into question. It must be said that, as defined by Foucault, the apparatus was conceived from the outset as heterogeneous and multiple: "a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourse, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements."[54] The concept is thus perfectly suited to expressing the diversity of cinematic experience.

The critique formulated through the study of early cinema thus concerns the concept apparatus *only as it was formulated by film theory*. It is a way of saying to researchers that they must look elsewhere, outside the box of film theory, and then return to it in new ways (see, for example, the article "L'*épistémè* '1900'" by François Albera and Maria Tortajada,[55] with its

concept “epistemological schema,” a schema of the signifying relations which can fashion our approach to knowledge and experience and in which the cinema plays an active role). Or even not return to it at all.

In fact the pluralizing of the concept apparatus has led to a series of challenges to the way we conceive film theory, which I will outline below.

1 Challenging the homogeneity of cinema

The pluralizing of apparatuses invites us to see cinema not as a homogeneous whole and to realize that there are as many ways to *speak of* cinema as there are apparatuses. It is no longer possible, the way Jean-Louis Comolli did in 1971–2 in his articles on technology and ideology,[56] to see *the* cinema as the product and mouthpiece of bourgeois ideology – because *the* cinema does not exist. Cinema is inherently plural. To theorize this phenomenon, it might be interesting, perhaps, to take up an idea that I advanced in my first article on semio-pragmatics in 1983, to which I have never returned (nor has anyone else, to my knowledge). There, I wrote that we might want to construct a *polylectal theory of cinema*.[57] The starting hypothesis would be that various cinematic “lects” (dialects) exist which define each other and constitute a system of structured variations. We call this system “cinema.”

2 Challenging the status of the film

A film does not remain unchanged when it moves from one apparatus to another: as Frank Kessler remarks, “a historical analysis based on the concept of *dispositif* [apparatus] … could actually take into account different uses of one and the same text within different exhibition contexts or different institutional framings.”[58] For example, Kessler points out, a travelogue on Africa in the 1910s could function as an exotic attraction in movie theaters and as colonial propaganda when screened by the Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft.[59] The move to pluralize the apparatus thus contributes to the process of inscribing film theory in the *pragmatic paradigm*.

3 Challenging the film’s primacy

Depending on the apparatus in which it is shown, the film is not always the most important aspect of the screening. This is clearly the case when attraction is generated by the machine “cinema.” It is also the case when the audience comes for the venue or the performance of the lecturer more than for the film. This phenomenon recurs in screenings of home movies: verbal interaction between family members is often more important than the film itself, which is watched quite little, as the articles in an anthology I have edited on the topic reveal.[60] A final example to show that this situation still occurs today: we go to see IMAX films for the effects produced by the apparatus, not for the film being shown. Film theory has often been reduced to the theory of *films*; early-film studies has reminded us that what matters is a theory of *cinema*.

There are even more challenges yet, opening up a veritable crisis of film theory.

4 Challenging cinema’s singularity

While a polylectal approach preserves the existence of an entity called “-cinema” (a heterogeneous entity, but an entity just the same), the way in which the apparatus is pluralized in early cinema has led some theorists, as we have seen, to view it as radically “other,” meaning that it is not “cinema” (this is Gaudreault’s thesis in his book *Film and Attraction*). From this point of view, we might ask ourselves if it would not be better to come up with different theories for “kine-attractography” and for cinema. If so, what forms would these new theories take?

5 Challenging cinema itself

Early film (note that the expression “early cinema” no longer really has any sense in light of what I have just said) appears to be fragmented amongst a whole range of apparatuses which, on their own, are not cinematic: cafés, fairgrounds, theaters, etc. It is impossible under such conditions to hang on to a theory of *cinema*. In addition, as we have seen, early film operated in a context of *widespread intermediality*. Should we, then, replace film theory

with *media* theory (a shift suggested by Janet Staiger with respect to history when she remarks that "scholars need to stop thinking of film history as *film* history and start thinking more about *media* history")?[61] Or even with *communication* theory? There's more: some early films don't even make an attempt to communicate. They are simply a kind of optical toy whose only goal is to produce effects (enchantment, thrill, etc.). This phenomenon is still quite present today: a filmmaker such as George Lucas considers his films to be an "amusement park ride."[62] Should we thus employ a theory of *cultural practices*? This opening up could no doubt continue indefinitely.

I think there is no answer to these questions, or at least that every answer is possible. Their great merit, however, is to remind us that every topic of enquiry is *created by us*. From a theoretical perspective, it is up to the scholar to determine if he or she wants to posit a break between early film and "cinema" as we understand the term today (this is a question of advisedness, not of fact). At the same time, it is up to the scholar to decide if he or she wishes to maintain "cinema" as a specific field of study or if they want to incorporate it into a broader line of enquiry. This too depends on the theoretical goals of one's work. After that, it's a question of one's personal relationship to the subject – a question of love.

Two remarks before concluding: first, we should bring a little more nuance to the picture I have painted thus far of the collaboration between theory and history brought about by the study of early film. This relationship is not quite as pacific as I have suggested. The authors who contributed to a special issue of *Cinema Journal* entitled "In Focus: Film History, or a Baedeker Guide to the Historical Turn," for example, may assert that there is "no boundary between history and theory,"[63] but everything about their contributions shows that they disdain theory and its jargon. I confess that the recurrent use of the term jargon flabbergasts me. It is as if it were not necessary to create a specific language in order to theorize. Their disdain for theorists who have converted to history is just as great. Sumiko Higashi, for example, contrasts those who do "history proper," meaning empirical research, with "film historians who began academic life as theoreticians"[64] and whose method remains too deductive (I was pleased to note that David Bordwell expressed the same amazement

as I on his blog).[65] The old cleavages have come back to haunt us once again.

Second, the collaboration between theory and history has led some researchers (and sometimes they are the same people who openly disdain theory!) to express the desire for a fusion of the two disciplines. Melanie Nash, for example, in her introduction to the issue of the journal *Cinémas* mentioned above, dreams of the "possibility of a reconfiguration for the discipline *as a whole*."[66] But history and theory belong to different epistemological fields. The historian Pierre Sorlin is quite clear in this respect: "The two activities do not meet insofar as they pursue different objectives using incommensurable methods and assumptions."[67] Historians and theorists can certainly work together and create alliances. The same researcher can even do both historical research and theoretical enquiry if he or she is qualified to do so, but the two are not the same. Sorlin notes, moreover, that connecting the two is less risky for history than it is for theory: theory takes second place for history, as if it were one more argument to buttress historical analysis, while theory has no other choice but to take history as its starting point, "to view history as a preliminary, and this poses serious problems."[68]

Whatever the case may be, by creating a new "field" of study (and we should understand this term in the precise sense in which Bourdieu uses it in the passage quoted as an epigraph to this chapter), with new issues at stake and new relationships (often of a power-struggle variety) among researchers, who are now obliged to position themselves differently because of the introduction of history as a scholarly discipline into film studies, the study of early film has undoubtedly given rise to the most profound process of theoretical thinking about film since the days of semiology. My goal in this chapter has been to unpack some elements of this process. One might also demonstrate (but this was not my purpose here) that this process has had an effect on other areas, in particular theoretical discussion of new media. It has helped to theorize their emergence[69] and their novelty,[70] at times by calling into question the distinction made between old and new media,[71] and has helped theorize the status of their products, digital in

particular.[72] A final shift: today, some scholars – I'm thinking in particular of Sean Cubitt[73] – have reversed the process and use the digital to rethink early film. We've come full circle.

Notes

1 Pierre Bourdieu, "For a Sociology of Sociologists" [1975], in *Sociology in Question*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Sage, 1993), 51.

2 André Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction: From Kinematography to Cinema* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 34.

3 Melanie Nash, "Introduction," *Cinémas* 14, no. 1 (2003): 16.

4 Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction*, 10.

5 Rick Altman, *SilentFilm Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

6 Alain Boillat, *Du bonimenteur à la voix-over. Voix attraction et voix narration au cinéma* (Lausanne: Antipodes, 2007).

7 For example, see Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

8 Francis Vanoye, "Présentation," *Iris* 3, no. 1 (1985): 1.

9 See Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999 [1990]); Jean Châteauvert, *Des mots à l'image. La voix over au cinéma* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck; Montreal: Nuits Blanches, 1996); Sarah Kozloff, *Invisible Storyteller: Voice-over Narration in AmericanFictionFilm* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); and Alain Masson, *L'image et la parole. L'avènement du cinéma parlant* (Paris: La Différence, 1989).

10 Germain Lacasse, *Le bonimenteur de vues animées. Le cinéma muet entre tradition et modernité* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck; Quebec City: Nota Bene, 2000), 16. On this topic see also Germain Lacasse, Vincent Bouchard, and Gwenn Scheppler, eds., *L'interrègne. L'héritage des bonimenteurs* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010).

11 See Christian Metz, *L'énonciation impersonnelle ou le site dufilm* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1991).

12 André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, “Le cinéma des premiers temps, un défi à l’histoire du cinéma?,” in *Histoire du cinéma. Nouvelles approches*, eds. Jacques Aumont, André Gaudreault, and Michel Marie (Paris: La Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1989), 49–63; for the English version, see “Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History,” in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 365–80.

13 Germain Lacasse, “L’accent aigu du cinéma oral,” in *Archives des lettres canadiennes* 13, *Le cinéma au Québec. Tradition et modernité*, ed. Stéphane Albert Boulais (Montreal: Fides, 2006), 48.

14 Ibid., 57.

15 Ibid., 49.

16 Boillat, *Du bonimenteur*, 37.

17 On this topic, see the special issue of the journal *Communications* I edited on “Le cinéma en amateur”: *Communications* 68 (1999).

18 On this topic, see my article “Questions posées à la théorie du cinéma par les films tournés sur téléphone portable,” in *Dall’inizio, allafine/In the Very Beginning, at the Very End*, eds. Francesco Casetti, Jane Gaines, and Valentina Re (Udine: Forum, 2010), 363–72.

19 André Gaudreault, *Du littéraire aufilmique. Système du récit* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck; Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 1988); revised and augmented ed. (Paris: Armand Colin; Québec: Nota Bene, 1999); for the English version, see *From Plato to Lumière: Narration and Monstration in Literature and Cinema*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). All quotations are from the English version.

20 Ibid., 7.

21 Ibid., 9.

22 Ibid., 10.

23 Ibid., 9.

24 Ibid., 24.

25 Ibid., 35; my emphasis.

26 Ibid.; emphasis in the original.

27 Ibid., 69; emphasis in the original.

28 Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde” [1986], in *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative*, eds. Thomas Elsaesser with Adam Barker (London: British Film Institute, 1990).

29 Michèle Lagny, *De l’histoire du cinéma. Méthode historique et histoire du cinéma* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992), 104–26.

30 Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction*, 16.

31 Lagny, *De l’histoire du cinéma*, 103.

32 Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, ed. and trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

33 See Charles Musser, “Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity,” in Strauven, *Cinema of Attractions*, 389–416. First published in the *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7, no. 2 (1994): 203–32.

34 Wanda Strauven, “Introduction to an Attractive Concept,” in Strauven, *Cinema of Attractions*, 20.

35 Gunning, “Cinema of Attractions,” 57.

36 See for example in Strauven, *Cinema of Attractions*, the section entitled “Attraction Practices through History [The Avant-Garde: section 1],” 227–90, and Boillat, *Du bonimenteur*, chaps. 4 and 5, 197–314.

37 “La théorie du cinéma, enfin en crise,” Roger Odin, ed., *Cinémas* 17, nos. 2–3 (2007).

38 Robert Sklar, “Does Film History Need a Crisis?,” *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (2004): 134–8.

39 See Jean-Louis Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus” [1970] and “The Apparatus: Metaphysical Approches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema” [1975], in *Apparatus. Cinematographic Apparatus: Selected Writings*, ed. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (New York: Tanam, 1980), 25–37 and 41–66, respectively.

40 Frank Kessler, “La cinématographie comme dispositif (du) spectaculaire,” *Cinémas* 14, no. 1 (2003): 25.

41 Jean-Pierre Sirois-Trahan, “Dispositif(s) et réception,” *Cinémas* 14, no. 1 (2003): 160.

42 Ibid., 161.

43 Kessler, “La cinématographie,” 26.

44 Ibid., 31.

45 Ibid., 26–8, 29.

46 Sirois-Trahan, “Dispositif(s),” 164.

47 Kessler, “La cinématographie,” 25.

48 See my article “Le film de famille dans l’institution familiale,” in *Lefilm de famille, usage privé, usage public*, ed. Roger Odin (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1995), 27–41; and Odin, “Cinéma en amateur.”

49 See Eef Masson, *The Pupil in the Text: Rhetorical Devices in Classroom Teaching Films of the 1940s, 1950s and Early 1960s* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

50 See Miriam Hansen, “Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Permutations of the Public Sphere,” *Screen* 34, no. 3 (1993): 197–210.

51 Hugo Münsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study. The Silent Photoplay in 1916* (New York: Dover, 1970 [1916]).

52 Tom Gunning, “Phantasmagoria and the Manufacturing of Illusions and Wonder: Towards a Cultural Optics of the Cinematic Apparatus,” in *Le cinématographe, nouvelle technologie du XXe siècle/The Cinema, A New Technology for the 20th Century*, eds. André Gaudreault, Catherine Russell, and Pierre Véronneau (Lausanne: Payot, 2004), 32.

53 Alison Griffiths, “Le panorama et les origines de la reconstitution cinématographique”; Dan Streible, “Children at the Mutoscope,” both in *Cinémas* 14, no. 1 (2003): 35–65 and 91–116, respectively. A French translation of Gunning, “Phantasmagoria,” was also part of the issue: “Fantasmagorie et fabrication de l’illusion: pour une culture optique du dispositif cinématographique,” *Cinémas* 14, no. 1 (2003): 67–89. A near-equivalent English-language version of Griffiths’ article appeared that same year under the title “‘Shivers Down Your Spine’: Panoramas, Illusionism, and the Origins of the Cinematic Reenactment,” *Screen* 44, no. 1 (2003), 1–37.

54 Michel Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh” [1977], in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, trans. Colin Gordon *et al*. (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), 194.

55 François Albera and Maria Tortajada, “L’*épistémè* ‘1900’,” in Gaudreault, Russell, and Véronneau, *Le cinématographe*, 45–62.

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57 Roger Odin, “For a Semiological-Pragmatics of Film,” in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, eds. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000 [1983]), 63.

58 Frank Kessler, “The Cinema of Attractions as Dispositif,” in Strauven, *Cinema of Attractions*, 61.

59 Ibid.

60 On this topic, see Odin, *Film de famille*.

61 Janet Staiger, “The Future of the Past,” *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (2004): 127.

62 Quoted in Richard Schickel and Marthe Smilgis, “Cinema: Slam! Bang! A Movie Movie,” *Time* 117, no. 4 (1981): http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,949205-2,00.html.

63 Donald Crafton, “Collaborative Research, Doc?,” *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (2004): 140.

64 Sumiko Higashi, “Introduction,” *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (2004): 95. Also of interest in the same issue is the article by Steven Ross, “Jargon and the Crisis of Readability: Methodology, Language and the Future of Film History,” *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (2004): 130–3.

65 David Bordwell, “Film and the Historical Return,” at http://www.davidbordwell.net/essays/return.php.

66 Nash, “Introduction,” 16; my emphasis.

67 Pierre Sorlin, “Promenades dans Rome,” *Iris* 2, no. 2 (1984): 11.

68 Ibid., 15.

69 On this topic, see André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, “A Medium is Always Born Twice …,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2005): 3–15.

70 On this topic, see Isabelle Raynauld, “Le cinématographe comme nouvelle technologie: opacité et transparence,” *Cinémas* 14, no. 1 (2003): 117–28.

71 On this topic, see Thomas Elsaesser, “The New Film History as Media Archeology,” *Cinémas* 14, nos. 2–3 (2004): 75–117.

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Part III

Early Cinema Forms

13

A Bunch of Violets[1]

Ben Brewster

The Vitagraph film *An Official Appointment* (released November 4, 1912)[2] tells the story of an old, retired Southern colonel in reduced circumstances who believes the government owes him a job. He sells up what remains of his estates and, accompanied only by his equally old body servant, who refuses to leave him, he goes to Washington and applies to the Secretary of State. His petition is subject to such delays that his savings run out and he has to live off what his servant can earn busking. The clerks at the Secretary's office, irritated by the Colonel's persistence and his aristocratic hauteur, play a trick on him by sending him a forged letter supposedly from the Secretary telling him a job is waiting for him. The old man is overjoyed at the letter and rushes to the office. While crossing the Mall, he saves a girl from injury by stopping the runaway pony pulling her trap. Arriving at the office, he is shown in to the Secretary, who tells him that the letter is a forgery. Bitterly disappointed, he has a slight seizure, but pulls himself together and returns home. Then the Secretary's daughter arrives and tells her father of the brave old man who saved her when her pony ran away in the Mall. Realizing that this man is none other than the recently rejected petitioner, she persuades her father to procure him a real post. She takes the letter of appointment to the Colonel's lodgings. Overjoyed, the servant and the landlady suggest she present the Colonel with the letter herself. When she is shown into the room where he is apparently dozing by the fire, she finds he has died in his sleep.

A story of this kind depends on maintaining two separate strands of action which are initially kept apart but eventually united. When he rescues the Secretary's daughter, the Colonel must not know who she is; on the other

hand, the Secretary must discover the identity of his daughter's rescuer in order to close the story by responding to his petition. It is clearly easy to imagine ways in which this might be achieved; the Colonel has no need of a previous acquaintance with the Secretary's daughter, and she could arrive at her father's office in time to see the Colonel leaving after his disappointment. *An Official Appointment* is of interest to me here because it adopts a less obvious and more ingenious solution to this problem. On the crucial morning, the Secretary is driven to his office by his daughter in her trap. Alighting by the steps to the West Executive Building, where the Department of State was located in 1912 (it is a feature of the film that its exteriors are all photographed in the real locations in Washington), he is struck by how pretty his daughter looks (she is played by Norma Talmadge), and, espying a flower seller standing by the steps, he buys her a bunch of violets in homage. She is carrying this at her waist as she drives through the Mall later, and when the Colonel rescues her, she casts about for some way to express her gratitude, and hits on the idea of giving him the flowers. He is still carrying them as he enters the Secretary's room, and when he receives the bad news and has the seizure he drops them on the floor. When the daughter comes to tell her father of her adventure, she sees the violets lying on the floor, asks her father how they came to be there, and thus discovers the identity of her rescuer. She takes the violets together with the letter of appointment, and when she finds the Colonel dead, she lays them with the letter in his lap.

The narrative is thus tied together by the violets, passed from the father to the daughter to the Colonel to the father (unknowingly) to the daughter and finally to the (dead) Colonel. They also bring out what is not quite so commonplace in a story composed of perfectly commonplace elements. In films (and no doubt other forms of fiction) in the 1910s, innumerable damsels are rescued when their horses run away, but the conventional rescuer is a young man who then, or more commonly later in the story, stands as a suitor to the girl. The Colonel is an old man who could only with difficulty sustain this role (though there are a number of films where adoptive fathers eventually court and marry their adopted daughters); the exchanges of the violets parallel his relation to her with her father's, and

hence it is proper that he die at the end, which would otherwise be tarred with incest.[3]

This bunch of violets almost irresistibly invites interpretation. But I shall resist this invitation, for what interests me far more is the way it produces this interpretability by, in effect, imposing a grid on the sequence of narrative events, while itself having little intrinsic part in the story. Props of a similar type are often important for films in the 1910s, but the bunch of violets in *An Official Appointment* has some special characteristics.

For a start, the film is not called *A Bunch of Violets*. Vitagraph had made a film with that title a few months earlier (released July 10). According to summaries of this film (I know of no extant print), it tells the story of Violet Ray, an actress, one of whose fans, the little daughter of a florist, regularly presents her with a bunch of violets. Tempted to desert her drunken husband, she is dissuaded by the devotion of the girl, who remembers to ask her father to send the violets even when she is in hospital recovering from a road accident. Here the violets are not simply a device to integrate two stories (though that is one of their functions); they also constitute the explicit focus of all the characters' actions. Other title-objects are similar: in the Biograph film *A Baby's Shoe* (released May 13, 1909), a brother and sister, separated in early childhood, each retain one of the sister's shoes. They later meet and nearly marry, until the shoe reveals their relationship, whereupon the brother returns to an earlier vocation and becomes a priest and the sister enters a nunnery. In the Edison film of the same name (released November 1, 1912), a coachman made redundant by his employer's purchase of an automobile is reduced to want and finally sets out to rob the former employer. When he has climbed into the house, he finds the shoe of his baby daughter in his pocket, has a change of heart, and leaves without committing the crime. The change of heart, and its cause, were witnessed by the employer, who thereupon restores the hero's position. In the Biograph film, the object is a recognition device, like the violets in *An Official Appointment*, but one generically predestined as such from the opening of the story, fulfilling a highly stereotyped function of anagnorisis; in the Edison, as in *A Bunch of Violets*, the object forms a focus for a character's change of heart. Objects of this kind frequently provide the titles of one-reel films. An unidentified Selig film from the Desmet

Collection was shown at the Pordenone Giornate del cinema muto in 1988 and told of a previously honest man tempted into theft by opportunity, who flees with his ill-gotten gains to a hotel, where he is mesmerized by the sight of an eye staring at him through a chink in the wall, in fact the eye of a mask tossed onto a shelf next door by an itinerant actor, and returns the stolen money before the theft is detected. I guessed that the film would be called something like *The Eye in the Wall*; it turned out to be *The Eye of Conscience* (released February 27, 1911).

Title-objects of this kind recall the links between the one-reel film and the short story. There were many versions between 1907 and 1915 of that canonic short story, de Maupassant's *La parure*, e.g., *The Necklace* (Biograph, released July 1, 1909) and *At the Eleventh Hour* (Vitagraph, released August 6, 1912). Objects on which turn the fates of the characters and which may feature as the title are also found in feature films, but the length of such films usually requires that they become more abstract objects of desire, even McGuffins, as in *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941), providing an overall motivation behind the series of intervening secondary goals of the characters which structure the individual episodes of the plot.

Objects, whether they feature in the title or not, can also serve a more straightforwardly symbolic function in 1910s films. Consider, for example, the red and white roses in *A Decree of Destiny* (Biograph, released March 6, 1911), which are offered to the hero by each of two sisters, which he later contemplates when he is deciding which to propose to, and which bloom and wither in response to the state of the romance; or those in *Red and White Roses* (Vitagraph, released March 10, 1913), which are juxtaposed, respectively, to the vamp who is hired by the politician hero's adversaries to ruin his reputation, and to his wife. The roses in the three-reel Swedish film *Trädgårdsmästaren* (*The Broken Spring Rose*, Svenska Biografteatren, submitted to the Swedish censors August 20, 1912) are ironically juxtaposed to the heroine's fall, a symbolism that disturbed the Swedish censors, who banned the film for its glamorization of her death, surrounded by roses in the greenhouse in which she was earlier raped.[4]

When the hero is choosing between the sisters in *A Decree of Destiny*, the roses stand in synechdocally for an intertitle, and Tom Gunning has pointed out that this is a common usage in Biograph films – for example, in *After*

Many Years (released November 3, 1908), the locket contemplated by the shipwrecked husband indicating a preoccupation with the wife back home in the next shot, raising the relation of simultaneity implied by the alternation almost to the level of a telepathic communication.[5]

By contrast with the title-objects, the bunch of violets is only mentioned at one point in the *Vitagraph Life Portrayals* summary of *An Official Appointment* – when the heroine finds them on the floor in her father's office. It is not mentioned in any of the film's titles (though it looks like there are titles missing near the end of the surviving print).[6] It is not isolated in any close-up – indeed, there are no close-ups in *An Official Appointment*. The only point at which it could be said to be singled out by a film technique is peculiarly negative. The Secretary's office, like all the interiors in the film, is shot in Vitagraph's standard medium-long-shot framing, so when the Colonel drops the bunch of violets, it disappears from the spectator's view and remains invisible until the Secretary's daughter picks it up later in the scene. It is thus not a thematic object. By contrast with the symbolic objects, it has no meaning, although it endows the story with significance in the sense of the capacity to be endowed with meaning, and is hence symbolic in the special sense Barthes gave that term in *S/Z*.[7]

An Official Appointment was released by the General Film Company in 1912. Films made around this time have for some time occupied a kind of historical limbo. Since the FIAF Congress in Brighton in 1978, it has been realized that the films made in the first decade of moving pictures are very unlike those we are familiar with today. In 1986, Tom Gunning gave this specificity a name, "the cinema of attractions," and contrasted it with later narrative films, which were the products of what he called a "cinema of narrative integration."[8] In 1994, Corinna Müller's research into the German film market demonstrated that the feature-length film that began to appear at the end of the 1900s did not arise by a gradual increase of the length of the films being made by existing producers, but involved the creation of new circuits of production, distribution, and exhibition.[9] I have suggested that this shift is international in scope,[10] and Lea Jacobs and I, among others, have argued that it involved significant aesthetic changes as well as

institutional ones.[11] Given that the one-reel film continued to flourish, indeed perhaps reached its apogee, after the first emergence of feature cinema, there is a decade of filmmaking which fits into neither the models of the cinema of attractions nor those of feature filmmaking. The films made in this cinema have typically been characterized as "transitional," but such a designation, if ever appropriate, is not so for such a clearly temporally demarcated filmmaking system. Tom Gunning himself has moved away from an account of Griffith's work as initiating the narrative cinema we are familiar with to one which rather sees that work – exemplified in the 1911 Biograph film *The Lonedale Operator* – as giving the "impression of a strong formal system subtending the narrative" which is "a key feature of the single-reel era."[12] In this chapter, I wish to propose *An Official Appointment* as exemplary in a similar way, although this results in rather a different characterization of the one-reel film.

When *An Official Appointment* was made, films were produced to be screened as part of a variety program in relatively small theaters which showed an hour-long program of short films many times a day, and changed that program very frequently, often every day. When these theaters began to proliferate some six years earlier, they proved highly profitable to their owners, but initially there were no barriers to entry, and all films were available to anyone. American film producers avoided the threat to prices, and hence profits and production values, that this open market implied and which ruined film production in several European countries,[13] by banding together into coalitions which obliged exhibitors to take their films only from members of the coalition. Initially there had been one such coalition, the Motion Picture Patents Company. Producers outside the coalition could only survive if they offered an equivalent service to that provided by the MPPC, which no single producer was big enough to do, so they had to form alternative coalitions. By 1912 there were three such coalitions: the MPPC, with its distributor, the General Film Company, and the groups distributed by Mutual and Universal.[14]

In order to survive, however, such coalitions had to deal not only with competitors outside but also the threat to the coalition represented by internal discontent. The coalitions handled this problem by their release

schedules. Each producer had regular slots in the week's schedule, thus guaranteeing that each got a fair chance for their films to be included in theater programs. To maintain the balance of those programs, producers had to be sure to produce the right amount of film for each day's release. Hence the 1,000-foot reel (about 16 minutes running time at 16 frames per second) became the key to the distribution system.

Initially, producers filled their day's reel with two or even three shorts adding up to one thousand feet (or more commonly a few feet less), but by 1912 most slots were filled with a single film. From 1911, some producers had the capacity to provide more than one reel on a single day, and small numbers of two- and even three-reel films began to feature in the schedule. This emphasis on a length built out of one or up to three modular units each lasting the relatively long time of a quarter of an hour made duration the crucial problem for filmmakers. When films had been shown in vaudeville houses as a program of shorts (shorts usually much shorter than one quarter of an hour) forming part of a mixed bill of mostly live acts, each film's main function for the audience had been to show them something surprising and interesting in its own right – to buttonhole the audience, as it were. With the rise of theaters showing film more or less exclusively and the emergence of the thousand-foot module, the problem became how to fill in a quarter of an hour of time. This in turn implied a more distant attitude to the spectator.[15] The devices I have been describing in *An Official Appointment* and its contemporaries, films of what can be called the "nickelodeon period," can be seen as a response to this problem.

For an example from the pre-nickelodeon period, take the British Gaumont film *The Blacksmith's Daughter, A Complete Novel* (released in the United Kingdom in October 1904). This tells the story of the daughter of a village blacksmith who ignores the suit of her father's assistant and runs off with the local squire. When he abandons her and her baby dies she returns to her father's home. He is about to refuse to recognize her when the assistant intercedes for her and says he will marry her. This film ends with the following sequence of shots: after a title, "Back to the old home," the scene shows a country road. The daughter is staggering along the road, and collapses by its side; two little girls who witness her collapse call for help. The blacksmith's assistant enters, recognizes the daughter, and also calls for

help; a man in a smock enters, and the two half carry the daughter off front right, watched by the little girls. The next shot shows another stretch of the road, its left side a wall topped by a paling fence, with a gate in it. The assistant and the daughter are at the gate, and exit left through it, apparently going up some unseen steps. The man in the smock and the two little girls enter front left, go to the gate, and the man lifts one of the girls so she can look over the fence off left. The next shot has the palings of the fence out of focus across its foreground, with a garden and house beyond. The assistant and the daughter are moving right to left along a path in the garden. In the final shot of the sequence (and the film), there is a house left with the blacksmith sitting on the terrace. The assistant enters right through the garden and speaks to the blacksmith; the daughter enters right after him and waits rear right. After vehement refusals and the assistant's gestured promise to marry her, the blacksmith relents and embraces his daughter.

What is astonishing in this sequence, to modern eyes, is the apparent use of incidental-character point of view to establish a new space. The little girls and the man in the smock appear nowhere else in the film, but it is hard to read the shot across the fence of the assistant and the daughter in the garden as anything but the little girl's point of view. Such a device is perfectly standard for classical cinema, and accords with its anthropomorphism. High and low angles in classical films are almost always presented as the actual views of characters, possibly extras, or at least as the views of potential fictional spectators of the scene. Horizontal change of angle may be motivated in the same way, though it hardly needs such motivation (especially if, as in the example from *The Blacksmith's Daughter*, the shots are linked by character movement). But angle change on a scene is rare enough in films before 1910, let alone such a sophisticated way of bringing it about.

The Blacksmith's Daughter was probably made by Alf Collins (I think he is the actor playing the blacksmith's assistant), and in a number of films made for Gaumont in Britain at the same period, some of which can definitely be associated with Collins, there are angle changes on scenes motivated by character movement: in *The Child Stealers* (US copyright – by the American Mutoscope and Biograph Co. – June 9, 1904), when men try to seize the villain, he runs out of frame right, and the next shot shows a

longer view of the same scene but with the camera moved to the right and turned some sixty degrees to the left, showing the villain and his pursuers running toward the camera; in *When Extremes Meet* (released in the United Kingdom in September 1905), as characters move from a right-facing park bench close to camera to one aligned with it further back, the next shot shows a frontal view of the second bench. The first of these examples almost certainly predates *The Blacksmith's Daughter*, the second postdates it. Perhaps Collins was uneasy about the low level of motivation for the earlier example (and possibly some lost companions) and, in *The Blacksmith's Daughter*, tried to boost it, but later felt this boosting was superfluous and reverted to the simpler character-movement motivation. But if there is an excess in the device, it is less extreme than in the somewhat similar case of *The Story the Biograph Told* (copyright American Mutoscope and Biograph Co., January 8, 1904), where a whole plot – a philandering office manager exposed in his seduction of his stenographer to his wife at a screening in a vaudeville theater after an astute office boy has photographed his activities with a moving picture camera – seems to have been invented to motivate the film's containing two different angles on the same scene: the main view of the manager's flirtation with his secretary, and the view of it seen in the vaudeville house from the position of the camera visible rear left in the main view.

This last example is typical of the devices associated with the "cinema of attractions." Rather than the film's devices serving a narrative function, i.e., contributing to the telling of a story, the story seems simply to provide an opportunity for, and a guide to the interpretation of, a device. The use of incidental-character point of view in *The Blacksmith's Daughter* is somewhat different from this. The film's subtitle – *A Complete Novel* – boasts its commitment to narrative; perhaps here one of the attractions is narrative itself: this film shows that films can tell stories (another Collins film, *Revenge*, released in the United Kingdom in September 1904, is similarly presented in the *Elge Catalogue* as "An animated novel in a nutshell"), and the anticipatory character of the device lies precisely in its subordination to a narrative function, the way it helps to establish the spatial and temporal relations between the content of two animated views. But all through my account of it there has been a hesitancy, a persistent doubt as to

whether the device is there at all except in hindsight. Isolated in the film, and in the cinema that produced it (though my appeal to Alf Collins and to related devices in other films possibly attributable to him is an attempt to find a context for it), this sequence of shots might be no more than an accident. By contrast, the narrative function of the bunch of violets in *An Official Appointment*, and hence its status as a device, can hardly be doubted. This is not because it is commonplace in films of the 1910s. On the contrary, I have emphasized its differentiation from similar uses of objects in such films, and cannot cite another instance of a prop which is on the one hand so important and on the other so athematic, so backgrounded in relation to the narrative as a whole. But its integrating function for so many other elements of the narrative guarantees its existence as a device in a way nothing does in the use of point of view in *The Blacksmith's Daughter*.

The two characteristics I have singled out that distinguish the form of the one-reel "nickelodeon" film – its relatively distant relation to its audience and its concern with duration rather than attraction – are also typical of the feature films that came to dominate film programs by the middle of the 1910s. As Corinna Müller demonstrated for the German cinema and as I have argued for the American, institutionally the feature film did not grow out of the one-reel film.[16] It did not come after it; rather it emerged alongside it. Moreover, feature films were not just longer than one-reel films, they were a great deal longer. Whereas the multiple-reel films of the one-reel period were articulated in one-reel segments, only some features continued this tradition. Especially in the United States, features were conceived as a single length, and the notion that a film was divided into many sequences, several times the number of reels, which varied in length according to their function in the developing narrative, soon became the norm. Finally, features were several times more expensive per foot than the one-reel films. Although both one-reel films and features were manufactured products, the one-reel film was more analogous to an automobile, produced on a production line to meet regular standards, where the feature was more like an ocean liner, planned and produced as a single item.

Our understanding and evaluation of the one-reel films of the early 1910s has suffered from their treatment as simply a stage on the way to the classical feature cinema, i.e., from the notion of the "transitional film." Far too much attention has been devoted to a diachronic, genealogical approach to this cinema, examining it to see how typical devices of the classical cinema – alternating editing, shot-reverse-shot, point-of-view editing, scene dissection – originated and developed. Such an approach is legitimate enough if genealogy is what is at issue: thus Kristin Thompson was justified in examining the one-reel film in this way in part 3 of *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*,[17] which was explicitly conceived and expounded as a prehistory of the classical cinema. But too often this genealogical picture comes to characterize the one-reel film as such. In an unpublished paper presented at a symposium held in Madison in May 2010 in honor of Kristin Thompson, Charlie Keil discussed a film made by Thanhouser and released by the Motion Picture Sales Company on May 26, 1911, *Get Rich Quick*.[18] The hero of this film is persuaded by his wife to join a friend in a fraudulent financial scheme. He gets rich, but many of the victims of the scheme are ruined. Eventually he and his wife have a change of heart, and work to restore the lost money to their victims. Keil noted that the film never explains the nature of the fraud, and took this as a sign of an inadequacy in the filmmakers' means of representation at this time. It is probably true that the resources available to the filmmakers at Thanhouser in 1911 did not include devices which would have allowed them to explicate something as complex as a financial scam. But this lack is not necessarily a failing of the cinema in which the film was made. All a one-reel film needs to convey is that the hero is involved in a fraudulent scheme, and the consequences that flow from that. The audience was familiar enough with financial scams to fill in the blank, and the brevity of the film justifies the absence of the explication. And once a film is, as it were, excused the duty of an explication, the lack of it becomes an aesthetic advantage. In a feature-length film, by contrast, the absence of such an explication would be either a failing or a marked lack, a mystery.

Similarly, in my article on *Traffic in Souls*,[19] I noted that, despite condemnation in screenwriting manuals, one-reel films continually resort to glaring coincidences to resolve their plots. I suggested that this was a

weakness of such films, though an excusable one. Subsequently, however, and especially in connection with the contributions I made to the *Griffith Project*, I have come to think that coincidence was something one-reel filmmakers gloried in, a *desideratum* rather than an unfortunate stopgap.[20] Coincidences provide the extraordinary events and situations which are the point of fiction; and the fact that the short form eliminates the need to provide motivation for them makes them even more extraordinary.

Thus, although the use of the exchange of the bunch of violets in *An Official Appointment* is anticipatory of the narrative devices of the feature films of classical cinema, it is also unlike them in its simplicity and isolation. No classical feature would build its whole narrative on the exchanges of a single object; rather, as in *The Maltese Falcon* or *Winchester '73* (Anthony Mann, 1950), the title-object generates avatars, the initially established object only returning *in propria persona* at the end, if at all (in *The Maltese Falcon*, the *real* title-object is never seen); or, rather than there being any privileged object, there is a series of isotopies, broad semantic axes establishing the interchangeability of objects, like the means of transport analyzed by Raymond Bellour in *North by Northwest* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1959) or the play of nationalities discussed by Stephen Heath in *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, 1958).[21]

As noted above, one of the few people to challenge the notion of the one-reel film as a "transitional" phenomenon, and to point out the teleological character of discussions of this transition in terms of the development of devices of narration, is Tom Gunning. Gunning continues to emphasize, however, the role of cinematic devices during this period, arguing that "a unique aspect of the single-reel era may lie in the foregrounding of editing, tinting, and other means of narration by an emphasis on their formal as well as expressive qualities."[22] But what is striking about *An Official Appointment* is how little emphasis is placed on the crucial device that binds the plot elements together into a systematic whole, the bunch of violets. The foregrounding of devices seems much more characteristic of a film like *The Story of the Biograph Told*, and even the incidental-character-point-of-view sequence in *The Blacksmith's Daughter* is more foregrounded (though admittedly, partly by hindsight) insofar as its isolation in the film

and the cinema that produced it draws attention to it. As I noted long ago, in connection with point-of-view devices in the early cinema, such devices are more frequently and more prominently found in the very first films than they are later, and especially in the one-reel period.[23] It is true that there were one-reel filmmakers interested in the development of devices, and that many devices of narration flourished in this cinema – multiple diegesis, reverse angles, scene dissection, and, of course, the one that Gunning (or his subject, Griffith) is concerned with, alternating editing. But this does not imply that films which eschew such devices, or downplay them, however rare, are uncharacteristic of the one-reel film, and it certainly does not imply that such films are inferior, or failures. As has often been pointed out, a genre (and the one-reel film is a genre by contrast with the feature in the same way that the short story is one in contrast to the novel) is not an average or least common denominator of its instantiations. Genre is a matter of potentiality, not actuality – it is what an instance of the work can be, not what such instances have been. It follows that limit cases are often more revealing of the nature of the genre than central ones. Insofar as the standardization of what is in perceptual terms a relatively long time span of a quarter of an hour became the central fact of filmmaking in the one-reel period, the film which minimizes the prominence of the devices that give it systematicity is in a deeper sense more typical than the films where the devices intrude on our attention. The special quality of a film like *An Official Appointment* lies in the way a single object, the bunch of violets, can sustain the whole narrative without forcing itself into the film's thematic limelight. Not many one-reel films of the 1910s so purely realize this potential, but it is one unique to such films, and thus demonstrates the *sui generis* character of the one-reel film.

Notes

1 This chapter originated in a paper presented to the Society for Cinema Studies conference held in Los Angeles in 1991, and as a contribution to the Film Studies Colloquium at the University of Wisconsin-Madison the same year. It has also been used as material for a number of UWM courses

on early film. I wish to thank all the colleagues and students who have commented on it over the years.

2 So named in *Vitagraph Life Portrayals* and all other contemporary publicity, but the apparently original main title on the print in the Library of Congress (the only print I know) has *His Official Appointment* – a difference only important for those who have to look these titles up alphabetically, but perhaps indicating that the Library of Congress's print derives from a reissue.

3 Unhappy ends are much more acceptable in the American cinema of the 1910s than in the feature cinema of the 1920s. This is not, so far as one can tell from the trade press, because there was any less of a sense that American audiences disliked morbidity, and that pessimism was alien to the American mind, but because the variety format of the nickelodeon program made it possible for audiences to enjoy the pathos of an unhappy end in a few of the stories in the program while the optimistic super-ego was placated by the happy ends of the other stories.

4 See Lars Åhlander, ed., *Svensk Filmografi*, vol. 1, *1897–1919* (Stockholm: Svenska Filminstitutet, 1986), 183–5; and Bengt Forslund, *Victor Sjöström, His Life and His Work* (New York: Zoetrope, 1988), 37, where the censor's comments are translated as follows: "The film as such is opposed to good conduct and justice through its depiction of death as something beautiful." *Trädgårdsmästaren* was not screened publicly in Sweden until 1980. Its title when first submitted to the censors in 1913 was *Världens grymhet* ("The Cruelty of the World"). The print that was identified in 1979 at the Library of Congress has a main title card that seems coeval with the rest of the film naming it *The Broken Spring Rose*. As far as I know, this is the only evidence for a US release under this title; no film was copyrighted in the United States as *The Broken Spring Rose*, and I know of no reference to such a title in the contemporary American press.

5 See Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film, the Early Years at Biograph* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 113.

6 There are no dialogue titles in the print as it survives. Most of the other Vitagraph films I have seen released in October and November of 1912

have several dialogue titles (in addition to a larger number of expository titles), and the exchange between the Secretary and his daughter when she sees the bunch of violets on the floor would be an obviously appropriate spot for one, and such a title might well have contained a reference to it.

7 See Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), esp. 25–7.

8 Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, nos. 3–4 (1986): 63–70.

9 Corinna Müller, *Frühe deutsche Kinematographie: Formale, wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Entwicklungen 1907–1912* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1994).

10 Ben Brewster, "Periodization of Early Cinema," in *American Cinema's Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices*, eds. Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 66–75.

11 Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

12 Tom Gunning, "Systematizing the Electric Message: Narrative, Form, Gender, and Modernity in *The Lonedale Operator*," in Keil and Stamp, *American Cinema's Transitional Era*, 22. Gunning's essay draws in part on the 1991 version of "A Bunch of Violets" (see note 1 above).

13 For the case of Germany, see Müller, *Frühe deutsche Kinematographie*.

14 For the analysis of the institutions of early cinema offered here, see especially Müller, *Frühe deutsche Kinematographie*; Brewster, "Periodization of Early Cinema"; and Richard Abel, *Americanizing the Movies and "Movie-Mad Audiences," 1910–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), chap. 1.

15 "Distant" in the sense of not addressing the spectator. Paradoxically, perhaps, this distanced attitude of the spectator is sometimes called "absorption."

16 Müller, *Frühe deutsche Kinematographie*; and Ben Brewster, "*Traffic in Souls*: An Experiment in Feature-length Narrative Construction," *Cinema Journal* 31, no. 1 (1991): 41–54.

17 Kristin Thompson, "The Formulation of the Classical Style, 1909–28," part 3 of David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The*

Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960 (London: Routledge, 1985), 245–472.

18 Charlie Keil, “Narration and Authorship in the Transitional Text: Griffith, Thanhouser, and Typicality,” paper presented at the symposium “Movies, Media and Methods: A Symposium in Honor of Kristin Thompson,” Madison, Wisconsin, May 1, 2010, now available online at http://www.thanhouser.org/research.htm.

19 Brewster, “*Traffic in Souls*.”

20 See in particular Ben Brewster, “*The Twisted Trail*” in *The Griffith Project*, vol. 4, *Films Produced in 1910*, ed. Paolo Cherchi Usai (London: BFI; Pordenone: Giornate del Cinema Muto, 2000), 43–5.

21 Raymond Bellour, “Le blocage symbolique,” *Communications* 23 (1975): 235–350, English translation as “Symbolic Blockage” in *The Analysis of Film*, ed. Constance Penley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 77–192; Stephen Heath, “Film and System: Terms of Analysis,” *Screen* 16, no. 1 (1975): 7–77; and no. 2 (1975): 91–113.

22 Gunning, “Systematizing the Electric Message,” 22.

23 Ben Brewster, “A Scene at the ‘Movies’,” *Screen* 23, no. 2 (1982): 4–15.

14

Modernity Stops at Nothing

The American Chase Film and the Specter of Lynching

Jan Olsson

Preamble

"Hints to Emigrants," a set of witty bullet points published in the London edition of *Vanity Fair*, line up cinema and lynching as salient aspects of American civilization. On the American industrial front, *Vanity Fair* shortlists "patent medicines, politics and the manufacture of moving picture films," while "the chief societal diversions are interviewing distinguished foreigners, lynching bees and visits to Europe."[1] In November 1912, when the impish list was published, American cinema was still predicated on a brisk turnout of mainly one-reel films produced by two dominant industrial conglomerates split along patent lines. In 1912, lynching, alongside less severe forms of vigilante retribution, continued to be in vogue even if less so than back in the 1890s when this mob practice peaked.

Similarly in a joking tone, the comic sheet *Puck* lauded the pleasurable insights conveyed by the nickel shows, lynching included: "True, it shows how stage-robbing is done and how to conduct a lynching, and so forth – but all that is like the moon; you don't have to live there, but it is pleasant to know something about it."[2] Parallel to the musings over vicarious

vigilantism, distressed Progressive-era reformers wanted to outlaw scenes targeting child audiences at penny arcades and nickel shows which featured gory violence and suggestive sexuality. This roster of meta-spectatorial reports (journalists' accounts of audience reactions), penned after observing very young spectators, came underpinned by alarming descriptions of cases of screen emulations as kids took matters into their own hands. The fad for lynching pictures, too, apparently inspired "copycatting" by youngsters. According to one notice, "several boys late yesterday afternoon determined to indulge in a lynching bee" and singled out a 5-year-old as their victim. He was saved in the nick of time as he was "cut down while hanging from a beam."[3]

The year before these "Hints" were published, a writer in the *Chicago Tribune* took exception to the very idea of connecting lynching to cinema. These comments were prompted by a decision in the Superior Court in Berlin, Germany. In a belated verdict, the court had granted a screening permit for the controversial Jeffries–Johnson fight picture, explaining that the film offers "an interesting picture of American civilization." Willing to swallow this semi-insult concerning the depiction of the thorny issue of race in American society as James J. Jeffries, the Great White Hope, lost to an African American pugilist, Jack Johnson, the journalist felt it necessary to draw a line. Were "a moving picture of a lynching," and hence a representation of racialized violence in a different form than exchanges of blows between black and white boxers, to "be exhibited to illustrate American civilization," then "our indignation will be genuine."[4]

I will hazard formulating such a contention and assume that the specter of lynching always hovered as a final resort over mob formation around 1900 in the United States, on and off the screen. More specifically: I will maintain that one of the transitional film models, the chase film, in its American guise, had at least one leg in this practice for administering extra-legal hands-on punishment. American newspaper archives will be consulted to place chase films within the context of the larger sphere of mob formation. For some, as will be shown in detail, cinema presented itself as an ideal vehicle for dislodging racial lynching from its local geography by offering such spectacles on screen to audiences everywhere with a taste for extreme forms of vigilante violence.

Scholarship

Maria Su Wang has elucidated the semantic history of the term mob and its roots in the Latin *mobile vulgus*. The expression signifies the possibility for many individuals to temporarily form and act as one body for a single-minded, inflamed purpose before dispersing after mission accomplished.[5] Perversely thrilling and horrific in the extreme, lynching spectacles, as mob-executed retribution, exerted a profound fascination both at the scene of the crime and in the American cultural imagination. The most distinguished study on this topic, published recently by Amy Louise Wood and pointedly titled *Lynching and Spectacle*, connects lynching to spectacle across historical media.[6] Such spectacles sought to position both African Americans and whites within a virtually preset scenario of racialized violence. This form of punishment under the banner of white supremacy was simultaneously culturally cohesive and segregating in several dimensions. Lynching in the South desperately clings to racial hierarchy even if post-bellum economics, demographics, and politics, at least in principle, militated against racial subjugation. It is important to remember, however, that lynching victims, especially outside the South, were not exclusively African American men, not even on the screen.

In the American context, vigilantism, not always lethal, seems to have originated as a frontier practice in the absence of functioning legal machinery, but it is, of course, most prominently associated with the South in its racialized version. In addition to Wood's poignant study, Ken Gonzales-Day has analyzed the history of lynching in the West, while from a more general perspective Jacqueline Goldsby brilliantly elucidates the cultural logic of lynching in America, primarily in literature, but with a chapter on visual representations across several media. And Matthew Bernstein devotes a book-length study to one of the most infamous cases, the Leo Frank lynching in 1915.[7]

Lynching, as an aspect of American history, has until the last few years been given short shrift in American film history, despite the preponderance of mob formation on the screen, especially in the chase film. Charles Musser of course mentions lynching in his tome on early American cinema,

and vigilante justice figures prominently in studies with an African American focus, from Thomas Cripps to Jane Gaines and Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, and in the diverse scholarship on the cinema of Oscar Micheaux.[8] The literature devoted to *The Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith, 1915) is too extensive even to mention here.

Lynching, I maintain, is part of the operative force of chase films in the American context. Screen chasing and mob formation – and sometimes chasing is intertwined with legal or extra-legal tracking – cannot be separated from this culturally significant quick-fix "justice" practice. Even if most American chase films stop at benign punishment, the prospect of stepping up the violence a couple of notches always lurks underneath the proceedings. And some films, without qualms, instantaneously hit a lethal level.

In implicit dialogue with Goldsby and Wood, I will discuss the crucial role violent retribution – hard and soft – occupies in the early years of transitional American cinema. A letter published in the *New York Times* in 1905 proposed a full-scale model for lynching cinema after vigilante cases in Texas.[9] After a detailed discussion of this ironic proposal, I will analyze a lynching film set in Colorado, a film mixing tracking with chasing prior to lynching. Tellingly, this chase film circulated both as *Tracked by Bloodhounds; Or, A Lynching at Cripple Creek* (Selig; shot by Harry Buckwalter in April 1904 at Cripple Creek) and alternatively as *Chased by Bloodhounds*. The reception of this film bears in intriguing ways on spectatorship and the reading of race in American cinema. I will also briefly discuss the comedic variation of the chase theme by focusing primarily on *The Watermelon Patch* (Edison, 1905).

The Chase Model

In a process of negotiated coexistence between two regimes of film culture, the chase films' punishment endings straddle a spectrum from benign and amusing chastisements to chilling closures featuring brutal lynchings. During a rich phase of media transaction, this particular transformational model is key as the chase film displays either ad hoc or purpose-driven mob

formation. Cinema, largely by way of this model and its roster of chase sprints, literally runs away from a regime of pure attractions to practices veering toward narrative integration. Pathé soon relayed and reframed the chase pattern, albeit with a French slant. In lieu of hardcore violence, the French films featured irreverent assaults on authority figures by pulling the rug from under hapless policemen, pompous officials, and patriarchy in an anarchic form of social havoc.[10] Adding new perspectives to previous studies, Jonathan Auerbach and most recently André Gaudreault have compellingly analyzed these shifts, and the pivotal role of the chase film within transitional cinema.[11]

Chasing alleged perpetrators, in all its thematic diversity, is thus at the core of one of the few early film genres developed in the United States, if not unequivocally pioneered there, before Pathé became the main purveyor. This transitional model, to use Richard Abel's term in a groundbreaking study on the French context, serves as a backdrop for Tom Gunning's recent revisiting of the cinema of attractions.[12] In the essay following Gunning's in the same volume, André Gaudreault offers an in-depth analysis of the chase genre as he examines American cinema with an emphasis on film titles from 1904 and 1905.[13] One of the key films in his discussion, *The Watermelon Patch*, dovetails with the issue of racialized violence as a white mob metes out vengeance on black farm hands. Although in this case the violence is far from deadly, I will return to this title below. *The Firebug* (Biograph, 1905), another exemplary film for Gaudreault, features a chase with a serious criminal deed in the balance, in contrast to the mainly trifling misdemeanors that otherwise provide the motivation for the most often discussed group of chase films. Still, I maintain, mob formation and the chasing of perpetrators invariably invoke a lynching potential in a US context even if the standard resolution stops short of lethal violence.

Among the American chase films from this period, Selig's *Tracked by Bloodhounds* stands out, together with *Avenging a Crime; Or, Burned at the Stake* (Paley & Steiner, 1904) and Edison's 1905 title *The White Caps*. Interestingly, only the perpetrator in the Paley & Steiner film is indisputably of African American descent, according to the producers' release materials. The prototypical chase film is otherwise *Personal* (Biograph, 1904), shot in

June between the two lynching films and copied widely. The pioneering American chase film, according to Musser inspired by English imports, was *The Escaped Lunatic* (American Mutoscope & Biograph, 1903).[14]

Newspaper Archives

Lynching practices came with a dark hue, as the majority of victims were African American males and most of them killed in the South or Southwest. In raw figures, 105 African American men were lynched in 1901, 85 in 1902, 84 in 1903, 76 in 1904, 57 in 1905, and 62 in 1906.[15] Black men were not the only victims, however: out of 4,743 instances of lynching between 1882 and 1968, more than a third (1,297) involved white men, while 3,446 were African American males.[16] Another statistical account, with a focus on geography instead of race, lists 3,403 incidents between 1882 and 1930: 75 percent in the South, 10 percent in Western states and border states, and the rest scatted over Midwestern states, New England, and mid-Atlantic states. The peak year was 1892 (230 incidents) followed by a steady decline.

Newspaper archives overwhelmingly reveal the extent of Jim Crow segregation and other racist practices bearing on film culture. In Atlanta, for example, the City Electrician could not legally license an African American man to work as projectionist under the local ordinances. “There are a number of negro picture houses in Atlanta and they all employ white operators. The picture show managers say they would rather have negro operators.”[17] To open a picture house for African Americans could in itself inspire a violent chase scenario, as it did in Fort Worth in 1911. According to one report, the picture patrons were chased from the show by over a thousand whites on opening night. The house was wrecked as “the mob began a systematic hunt for negroes.” In the process, “the rioters invaded every place where a negro was seen and if the lucky darky was not fortunate enough to outrun his persecutors he was set upon and beaten.”[18] Exhibition practices were policed in Little Rock, where a show proprietor was fined $1,000 for “exhibiting a picture to negroes in which a negro was

shown embracing a white woman."[19] A few years later, the chase-film scenario was so established that it was natural to read pursuits in everyday life in genre terms as thrilling spectacles. When a young man was reported to have snatched a purse, it was reported that "pedestrians and residents … were thrilled last night at the sight of a trim little woman, skirts held in running shape, darting down Capitol avenue in pursuit of a negro youth. 'Stop him, he's a thief!' she cried. Soon it resembled a moving picture pursuit, where the fugitive is chased by all types of citizens, mostly women."[20]

Putting Lynching in Context

While culling the newspaper archives, a matter-of-fact proposal – albeit with scare quotes signaling the irony – for setting up a company for the purpose of documenting lynching gave me pause. Irony aside, it is a document very much embedded in this process of transition for cinema and one deserving detailed discussion for its implicit film philosophy.

John R. Spears' mock proposal was penned late 1905 at a time when film culture was in the midst of multiple transitions. Spears' letter to the editor was put forward as a tasteless spiel in the manner of Jonathan Swift's classic essay *A Modest Proposal* – why not eat babies to combat the Irish famine? "I have been assured," wrote Swift, "by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled." As a latter-day Swift on a mock-racist mission, Spears sprinkles his proposal with scare quotes, giving the game away.[21]

Presumably unbeknownst to Spears, lynching was not a cinematic novelty in the fall of 1905, but his letter is tied up with cinema's ongoing negotiation of nascent narrative models more or less fortified by built-in attractions. As film spectacles in a US context, scenes of lynching offer a suspenseful trajectory with a culturally predictable closure running parallel to the chase film. The chase model was instrumental for mapping the spatiotemporal terrain for film stories with one eye still to attractions.

Spears, in his mock pitch for screen lynching, cuts to the chase by bypassing the chase phase proper, opting instead for a spiced-up topical detailing of the climactic attraction in the chase trajectory.

A former journalist at Charles A. Dana's *The Sun*, John R. Spears (1850–1936) is best known as a naval historian. As a spin-off from his marine research, he published a history of the slave trade in 1901, which was recommended as informative reading by one of his informants W. E. B. Du Bois.[22] In addition, he was a highly prolific contributor to magazines and newspapers around the turn of the century, not the least of which was the *New York Times*. He was thus a seasoned and versatile writer when he elected to play up lynching in the light of nickelodeon-era culture.

His proposal was not to reenact an event cinematically, but to shoot as the lynching unfolded in real time. Prolonging the "death dance," and thus transforming the macabre attraction into scenes of instruction for movie audiences, presupposed a cultural foreknowledge of the larger narrative trajectory and standard script for vigilante vengeance: killing black men accused of crimes against white women. Due to technical constraints around filming the entire course of a lynching, according to this all-too-real and all-too-familiar narrative, Spears cuts straight to closure and the prolonged, metonymic dénouement, "fearing" only that the burning at the stake will not come across with enough "zest." The extended climactic moment stands in for the full narrative in lieu of a compressed reconstruction or a purely fictionalized depiction.

One of three highly publicized Texas cases of lynching late in the summer of 1905 detailed the burning of Thomas Williams on August 14, 1905 in Sulphur Springs. In one of history's freaky coincidences, a depository of American pre-nickelodeon films was discovered in Sulphur Springs in 1993; among the more than thirty titles was a copy of a lynching film predating Spears' proposal by a year: Selig's *Tracked by Bloodhounds*. Cripple Creek, in Colorado's mining district, was the site of a double lynching in the 1890s and of violent labor conflicts in 1903 and 1904. The Selig film is, however, quite different in style from Spears' "ideal," as the closing "attraction" is very short indeed and barely perceptible. In contrast, the drawn-out documentary mode of depiction Spears proposed was arranged to better suit the Kinetoscope and the day's type of programming,

featuring headliners such as *Tracked by Bloodhounds*, a film we will return to.

Spears' letter, entitled "A Suggestion," contained the subheading "Why Not Have a Texas Lynching Reproduced by Kinetoscope?" His letter was prompted by newspaper reports from Howard, Texas about the last of three summer lynchings in the lone-star state, this one featuring the burning of Steve Aron (sometimes called Aaron Jessie or Steve Davis). Spears' point of departure is the fascination the lynching had generated locally as an outdoor spectacle for a large audience as a staged event. After the man was tracked down, brought in front of and identified by his victim, and confessed, the actual punishment was delayed for two hours. The sheer magnitude of the mob thwarted any possible intervention by the authorities should they have been so inclined. Pondering this, Spears writes: "After reading the account of the burning of that 'nigger' at Howard, Texas, I am moved to make a suggestion. It was stated that '2,000 gathered to see the burning,' and that 'the roofs of the farm houses and farm buildings for miles around were covered with people'." Given the popular appeal for this pre-advertised event, Spears suggests "that it would be good business enterprise to organize a stock company, and send a kinetoscope to the next lynching of the kind in order to secure a complete series of photographs of the event." The proposal hence partakes in cinema's remediation of stories picked up from news columns.

As an impromptu spectacle, the Howard lynching came with some special features, distinguishing it from the unbroken trajectory of the chase films in which a crime or minor transgression, real or imagined, spurs mob formation, followed by a more or less drawn out chase/tracking over the course of several shots with or without variations leading up to a closure and a form of instant-punishment ending, which in extreme cases could be lynching. Spears dwells on the fascination the spectacle of lynching offered the audience in place and on how to negotiate cinema's inability to reproduce some key haptic elements found in the real thing – smells, sounds, heat from the fire – for audiences attending the event only theatrically. For those visually transported to the scene, pro-filmic arrangements, framing, editing, and exhibition practices would still not fully make up for this lack of immersion. The leaner film version would

still have indisputable merits, precisely by expanding the audience base for an otherwise local event by turning it into a cinematic headliner in an ethnographic register, that of showing a highly guarded practice, which Spears describes as “work,” while simultaneously ushering in a vivid spectacle or “show” featuring gruesomeness writ large, callously described as “the ‘nigger’s’ contortions” for ironic effect. Writes Spears: “As everyone knows, this photographic material can then be used to portray to people elsewhere just how such work is done. The show would lack the zest given by the screams and prayers of the ‘nigger,’ but in spite of this lack it is fair to suppose that if 2,000 people will gather in a small community like Howard to see the real thing, at least 1,000 would pay 25 cents each, in an average show town, for an evening with a series of photographs showing vividly the ‘nigger’s’ contortions.” This type of show, even when removed through cinema from its physical context and thus less vivid for viewers, would still meet popular demand, Spears claims, and therefore represent a good business opportunity.

Spears considers film length as a crucial problem. He thus proposes profilmic remedies to guarantee material of adequate length. Spears’ imaginary film producer must therefore partake in the staging of the proceedings in order to secure a cinematically appropriate course of events with respect to the film’s length, given the loss of several haptic dimensions in the hypothetical filming of the burning. In the manner of Swift, Spears expresses no qualms about actively obtaining an appropriate length for lynching films by imposing remedies for the alleged cinematic drawbacks caused by the speed with which the critical phase of the lynching unfolded according to the Howard reports. Interestingly, and in line with film reformers’ proposals for rethinking cinema’s role, he noticed the amalgamation of entertainment and instruction for screen culture and how a too briskly-burning pyre would literally cut short the instruction value. “I did not fail to note that in the case of the Howard ‘nigger’ his struggles ceased in five minutes after the match had been applied. Five minutes of struggling, as any one can see, might seem too short an entertainment to a gathering who were viewing photographs only, but it will occur to any man of business instincts that that is a defect easy to remedy, when it is known, in advance of the burning, that a kinetoscope man is to attend in the interest

of public entertainment and, I may add, public instruction. A slower fire – one with only half a barn to it, or without kerosene – will prolong the struggles to any length necessary to meet public demand." Fascination is thus a prerequisite for drawing crowds to instructive depictions of the notorious but sequestered cultural practice of lynching.

It might be timely to bring in the accounts from Howard that prompted Spears' "suggestion." After being apprehended and identified by his victim, Steve, the victim of the lynching, confessed that he had indeed attacked the woman, still "in critical condition." He had hit her four times in the face and neck and "pulled out her tongue. That is all I done." He denied having "committed any other crime upon her." Steve had intended "to commit an outrage on Mrs. Norris but became frightened and ran away." The accounts in the New York press all elaborated on Texan sources. According to *The Sun* (New York), Steve begged the mob to be hanged or shot instead of burned, but was turned down after a vote as one farmer offered to sacrifice an old barn as a pyre for the stake. The victim's husband allegedly set the match to the soaked wood from the barn in front of an audience around the stake, in addition to spectators scattered across the county. As the *Times* described it: "The galleries and roofs of prairie farm houses and farm buildings for miles around were covered with people."

The accounts of the critical five minutes are somewhat divergent. According to the *New York Times*, Steve "yelled and struggled continuously while the pile was being saturated with kerosene. His struggles ceased in five minutes after the match had been applied." An account from Palestine, Texas, depicted him as less soft. Claiming that he had attacked the woman "just for meanness," Steve "never begged for mercy or screamed and only one exclamation of 'Oh Lord' was heard from him. In a few minutes the flames enveloped his body, he became still and all was over." No bones or ashes to collect here, as "not a trace of the negro was left but his heart."[23]

The variety model Spears proposed as part of his hypothetical program employed concatenation rather than sharp thematic breaks between titles: he envisioned a mood-setting film depicting an older form of local burning culture featuring alligators leading up to a modern Texan lynching. As "our people demand variety in their entertainments I beg to remind any one going into this show business that the Indians living on the banks of Trinity

River, Texas, in former days, were in the habit, when they had no human enemies to burn, of capturing an alligator alive for a substitute." Finally, to add extra flair and a heightened level of instruction to the screenings, Spears suggests that a lecturer from the Texas Bureau of Immigration accompany the show. If so, "I am sure its drawing power would excel anything that has ever been offered to the American people." Spears entertains the idea that his virtual lynching films would offer a draw not only in theaters, but would inspire people to take up residence in Texas, which was the objective of the Texas Bureau of Immigration. Spears ends with the caveat that not everyone will cheer his business idea: "Of course, such a show as this might cause a few fanatics to protest, but it need only be said that such people don't know the 'nigger,' and they have no adequate idea of the present state of American civilization."

This is indeed a clever *tour de force* playing up imaginary gruesomeness and blatant racism, which had its correlates in the chase film's disciplinary endings – one pole in a comedic register, the other featuring staged lynching scenes. Bloodhounds figured prominently in both variations of the genre.

Bloodhounds

Amy Louise Wood characterizes the films from this period in a way consistent with the impetus for Spears' business plan. "The producers of these films," she writes, "who were white, urban, and northern, intended to seduce viewers by offering the sadistic thrill of watching another's violent death and satisfying a perverse curiosity about executions and hangings."[24] Straight-faced Spears anticipated no shocks for his proposed violent display, only the loss of "zest" in relation to the live spectacle. Authorities sought to seal off legal executions from the public eye and even more so from the gaze of the camera. Depicting a real lynching, in the manner of Spears, raised the stakes also for the lynching mob should visible evidence begin to circulate.

The Cripple Creek film, which we now turn to, introduced full-fledged lynching at a very early phase of the chase film model, and the theme was soon developed in a more familiar direction in *Avenging a Crime; Or,*

Burned at the Stake by featuring a white mob chasing an African American man. The Selig film belonged to the Western film genre and featured a vaudeville actor specializing in Irish comedy, Chris Lane, as the lynched murderer. Lane was on the bill in Chicago when Edison's Vitascope was premiered at Hopkins' South Side Theater in 1896, and was presumably recruited by Selig for uncredited roles quite early. Around 1910, Lane was head of Selig's scenario department for a time.

The Cripple Creek film is somewhat of a hybrid, starting out with tracking before turning into full-throttle chasing for the larger part of the film. Chase films proper normally proceed by way of tableau-like shots simultaneously framing both chasers and the person chased. The inspiration for the Cripple Creek film might have been Robert Paul's 1903 title *Bloodhounds Tracking a Convict*.

The Cripple Creek film consists of twelve shots, or scenes, as described in the *Selig Catalog Supplement*; the final shot is emblematic and shows the bloodhounds after the lynching. In the first shot, a man, identified as a tramp in the catalog description, walks into the frame along a barn-like house: a miner's cabin, according to the Selig text, which also offers a street address for added realism. After a brief glance toward the camera, the tramp knocks on the door. Cut to the interior and a woman sitting at a table reading a newspaper. She responds to the knocking, in fact hurriedly throws away the paper, opens the door, and invites the stranger in. From the outset, sound cues are quite significant in the film. The tramp asks for food and as the woman walks off-frame left, he sits down at the table, after having dropped his hat on the floor. She returns with a plate, but he throws it away dissatisfied and demands money. Not finding any after her refusal, he attacks her and without much effort chokes her to death before continuing to search for money in a chest. Responding to sound cues as the woman's daughter approaches the cabin, the tramp hides behind the door and sneaks out unseen as the girl, in stock gestures, discovers her dead mother. Soon the husband enters and the daughter, through pantomime, explains the horrid situation. Her father finds the tramp's hat, picks up a rifle, and embarks on an avenging expedition, conveyed in body language. This is the most complex shot in the film in terms of narrative content.

Shot 3 returns to the set-up for shot 1 as bloodhounds sniff around for scent outside the cabin. Having picked up a whiff, they start tracking together with a small posse in tow as keepers and dogs lead the way. In shot 4, a keeper with his two dogs on a leash runs slightly uphill toward and past the camera, followed by a large group of men and some young boys. The mining camp is visible in the background, grounding the story in the highly publicized locale of Cripple Creek. While the last few men pass, one in company with yet another dog and many very close to the camera, a pan to the left slightly prolongs the shot. In shot 5, the tramp sits under a tree. Fastened on the trunk, prominently mid-frame, is Selig's diamond-shaped company logo with the initials WNS on a banner of flimsy fabric. The tramp pulls his hair in despair realizing what he might face if apprehended. Hearing the approaching posse, clearly marked by him placing his hand behind his ear and looking off-frame perpendicular to the camera, he turns around running toward the background. He temporarily hides behind the next tree before running off-frame left. Again the terrain is slightly uphill. The frame is vacant for a short time until two keepers and their respective dogs enter from behind the camera foreground right. The camera set-up for this shot foregoes the customary framing for chases with the crowd running from the background at a right angle toward and past the camera. Given the change from one keeper with two dogs to the two men and dogs in this shot, there seems to be bit of a temporal hiatus between shots 4 and 5. This is significant for the film's difference from pure chases, which have minimal temporal breaks between shots, even if this involves a lack of precise continuity. Here the dogs reaffirm the scent under the tree and the keepers, followed by the posse, give chase. We still haven't seen the adversaries present in the same shot.

In shot 6, the pursuit shifts terrain to a forest. The camera is placed so that the tramp, when entering the frame, runs uphill and thereafter consistently toward the camera. This is a first shot in a receding series of camera placements mirroring the movement toward and past the camera from shot 4. In shot 6, the tramp stumbles before running off-frame in mid-field left. Shortly the keepers, followed by the posse, emerge. The tramp seems to be in sight, because some of the pursuers begin to fire their weapons. There's another slight pan (to the right) as the large group passes left of the camera,

some very close. In shot 7, the tramp runs uphill and leaves the frame as the posse enters it; here is the first moment of brief co-presence in the frame. The trigger-happy pursuers are still violently firing away and smoke envelops the terrain, so much so that one of them stumbles over the Selig logo, now placed on the hillside on a stick, before the group has exited the frame.

In shot 8 the logo has been reinstated and again securely fastened on a trunk. As the tramp stops on a hillside, one of the pursuers jumps him. Struggling, they roll down the hillside and out of frame. The posse follows suit, still firing while exiting frame right close and parallel to the camera. The tramp runs down some stairs to a simple suspension bridge in shot 9, firing a volley of shots before jumping into the water. The posse stops at the bridge, some of the men still firing. Shot 10 shows the tramp being captured and brought to the creek bank as the camera pans right. One man in the posse carries the rope to be used in the next shot. Shot 11 opens with a quick, reframing pan and the posse in long shot under a group of large trees. The shot is jumpy and has a short break for another reframing or a lost camera movement preceding the hanging. The tramp is standing on the ground with a noose around his neck or under his arm, it is difficult to ascertain which. He is pulled up and more or less instantly fired at as the shot abruptly ends. In the copy at the Library of Congress, shot 12 with the bloodhounds in an emblematic tableau rounds off the film. This shot is missing from the copy from Sulphur Springs.

The film was shot for Selig by Harry Buckwalter, a seasoned photographer and filmmaker.[25] Not the most experienced at tempering overblown acting, something evident in the melodramatic shot 2, Buckwalter shows a good eye for pictorial values and outdoor compositions. Throughout the film he uses height differences in the terrain for variation in the movement within shots and creates additional dynamism by panning.

Seemingly played by a white actor without blackface, the tramp is adequately described by Wood as “a man with dark complexion and a large black beard.” Racial divides are often blurred, which is evident from this film’s reception, which points to a reading of white people lynching an African American man. A perception of the tramp’s racial identity as non-

black obviously goes against the grain of the cultural imagination around lynching, which almost as a default featured African American victims. Audiences were seemingly prone to cling to the standard version of lynching and in several accounts the tramp was described as a black character. There is no reason to distrust the casting information from William N. Selig, that this particular film featured the white vaudeville comedian Chris Lane as the tramp.[26] In spite of its dismal quality, the sole surviving photograph below corroborates that Lane indeed played the tramp, not least due to his characteristic hairline. Two frame enlargements from the film are provided for comparative purposes.

Figure 14.1 Chris Lane, 1872–19??, *Utica Sunday Tribune*, April 25, 1909, 2. No hard copy of this newspaper has survived from 1909. This photograph has been captured from the microfilm run's dismal resolution. As no other photograph of Lane is known to have survived, we have elected to publish this image as part of the text's evidentiary chain in spite of its poor quality.

Reports in the local press from the shooting as well as around the film's reception are somewhat confusing. Throughout the long account in *Cripple Creek Times* of the actual shooting, the man is described as a "tramp" or "murderer," as in Selig's catalog. In addition, the article offers details of the actual lynching scene beyond what can be observed from the preserved copy: "As they gain on him he turns and fires, but is finally compelled to take to a tree. The mob comes up and begins shooting. Almost at the first shot the man is killed, but the bullets are poured into his body for several seconds, until the city marshal and a deputy sheriff come up and stop the work. While the body is being taken down, the mob starts towards the camera shouting and laughing over their work, and every face is distinctly caught by the lens."[27] Obviously, given the distant shot scale, the reporter exaggerated the faces' visibility for the lens.

The very first account of the film was published in another local newspaper the day before the shooting. As for Spears and the events in Texas, the lynching film is perceived to be "an opportunity to advertise the town." The story outline only partially matches the preserved copy. In contrast to the description in *Cripple Creek Times*, the pre-notice describes the leading player as "a negro." In all likelihood, this is an assumption in line with the cultural model for lynching. The capturing of the chased man in this account doesn't mirror how the events played out during shooting. "A negro will commit a fake assault at a nearby cabin and the hounds will be placed on his trail before he gets a hundred feet away. The negro will climb a tree to escape the dogs and at this juncture an armed mob is to appear on the scene and capture the trembling darkey. A fake lynching will immediately follow."[28] In this outline, the story is highly condensed, as if the film would come to an end in shot 5, without the chase part of the film.

Figure 14.2 *Tracked by Bloodhounds; Or, A Lynching at Cripple Creek* (Selig, 1904). Frame enlargement from shot 2. Courtesy of G. William Jones Film and Video Collection, Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

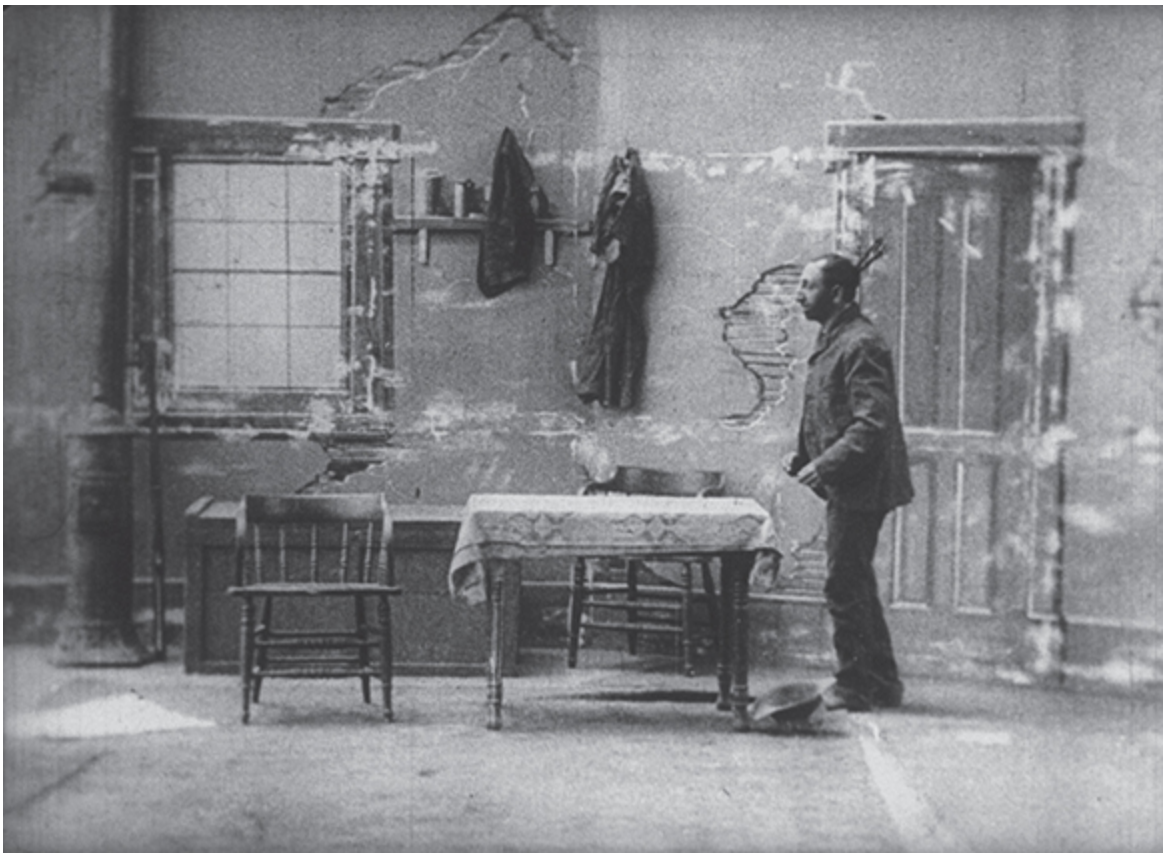


Figure 14.3 *Tracked by Bloodhounds; Or, A Lynching at Cripple Creek* (Selig, 1904). Frame enlargement from shot 5. Courtesy of G. William Jones Film and Video Collection, Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

Reception items from the time – few, far between, and brief – read the tramp as black. According to a mystifying notice originating in Cripple Creek, “a mob of negroes” had threatened to lynch a man “of their own race.” Apparently, “the mob that drove the man, named Edwards, out of the district” claimed that he had posed for a group of films, one of them featuring a “criminal assault upon a white woman and the chase of the criminal by bloodhounds.”[29] Given Selig’s statement that Chris Lane played the part, the mysterious Mr. Edwards’ role here is difficult to make sense of. The drift, however, is that the murderer in the film was played by a black man. Interestingly, Wash Edwards managed to secure a written alibi from the filmmaker, Buckwalter; thus another notice concludes, “the real poser for the scene was a local citizen who was blacked up for the occasion.” Furthermore, “Edwards was not even in Cripple Creek when the negatives were made.”[30]

A notice from a church screening in 1906 for an African American audience, written in a meta-spectatorship mode, ventures a reading of the tramp as indisputably black. This screening in a Baptist Church in

Richmond, Virginia, was “witnessed by 2,000 colored people.” The identifying descriptive line for the film reads: “a lynching scene was shown in which bloodhounds were hot on the trail of the negro.” At the climactic moment, “as the negro was shown dangling from a tree,” the notice states that “the entire audience of colored people arose and applauded.”[31] Obviously, the tramp’s “dark complexion,” as Wood phrases it, was enough of a cue for reading him as black for some audiences – and for the notice writer. But why would an African American audience in Virginia celebrate vigilante justice and the killing of a black man? Reporting African American approval of white lynching violence against black criminals would justify lynching as a fair punishment for crimes against white women and thereby endorse lynching practices as culturally acceptable across ethnic boundaries. To match this contention, the tramp’s African American identity is written up here as if it were the audience’s collective reading. A more likely explanation for the reaction in the Baptist Church is that the writer, deliberately or not, misinterprets the audience reading and its understanding of the criminal not as African American, but as non-black. From such a perspective, a depiction going against the grain of the classic lynching scenario might have seemed worth rooting for in Virginia by an African American audience.

Reading spectatorship in action opens up for cultural reflexes when filling in gaps from the cues at hand, on screen and in the theater. The era-specific absence of close-ups further complicates this. Had the filmmakers intended “the tramp” to be read as black, the catalog description would presumably have been unequivocal and explicit. The casting of Chris Lane, as reported by Selig, is telling on an intentional level, and no traces of blackface are discernible in the surviving copies. More than anything, the reception materials demonstrate cultural pressure to read the perpetrator/victim as African American, peaking in the Virginia attempt at enlisting colored audiences in cheering for the lynch mob and their putative “just” cause.

Buckwalter’s film is a key work within the American chase genre, despite the additional element of tracking, and it demonstrates the significance of lynching for understanding the cultural ramifications of the chase model and its spectatorial resonance. Furthermore, the film’s reception shows that representation and what people see in a film are truly contested matters.

Racial Merriment: Chickens, Watermelons – and Pumpkins

The Watermelon Patch is a tracking/chasing film indicative of the genre's comedic ambitions, albeit still in a racist register, which is made evident in Jackie Najuma Stewart's fine analysis of the film's narrative and mise en scène. For André Gaudreault, the film is a rarity in that it comes with a form of parallelism, read as a rudimentary type of crosscutting.[32] *The Watermelon Patch*'s hybridity is even more complex in that it is disputable if the chase phase has any grounding outside a form of meta-imaginary, perhaps being only a collective fantasy visualized as a bizarre spoof on the chase genre in a trick mode, but without film tricks proper.

From the perspective of the collective white imagination, turning scarecrows into skeletons in order to spook melon thieves is a way of toying with the putative tendency of black people to be susceptible to a gamut of irrational superstitions. Here, as a large group of African American men gathers in a patch to steal watermelons, two scarecrows in the background suddenly strip off their overcoats to reveal black skeleton-painted bodysuits before stepping down from their crosses to chase the black men instead of scaring black crows. The watermelon thieves scamper away with their loot with the animated scarecrows in tow mechanically waving their arms. Contrary to Gaudreault's claim but in line with Edison's catalog description, there is no chasing by "two white men."[33] Instead, we see skeletal fantasy figures on an asinine mission as "the scarecrows throw off their outer garments and appear as animated skeletons," according to the catalog text. Masquerading is never mentioned in the ensuing catalog description of the chase; the skeletons are consistently described as just skeletons. Their status is thus undetermined in multiple manners. The African Americans, however, are smart enough to shake the skeletons after a couple of chase shots. Had the filmmakers offered an intertitle here saying "Meanwhile," the following, long dance sequence inside a shack would have been easier to relate to the proceedings. Instead audiences are treated to an extended attraction-style diversion, but without edits, until one of the watermelon men steps into the frame to partly connect the dots.

In the ensuing shot, and parallel to the merriment, one assumes, a group of white men with dogs assembles at the place where the chase ended. At this moment, after the long scene from the cabin, the film changes pace from chasing to tracking. More importantly, the former flight of fancy in a trick-cum-chase mode is substituted for a real tracking affair where it is unclear whether the white men will find the thieves. The white mindset is illegible in the absence of closer framing giving away facial features and body language to cue exactly what to expect. The presence of dogs raises the stakes, while the jocular mode in the cabin seemingly militates against violence. The dogs successfully lead the posse and already in the next shot the posse assembles outside the shack. At this stage, somebody inside closes the window before the white men nail the door shut and block the chimney. As smoke envelopes the group inside, the window is opened up and a woman tries to climb out. For a considerable time, she hangs stuck in the window frame kicking with bloomers on display for comic purposes. As the group is hauled out via the window, a whack or two is delivered before the people from the shack run out of the frame.

Much of the film's meaning hinges on how one reads the second part of the opening shot. Effecting a costume transformation without resorting to animation proper only makes sense within the confines of a white imagination which viewed black Southerners with inordinate superstition. This farfetched attempt at defining the watermelon patch as haunted hopes to keep hapless African Americans out for good. Consequently, the thieves come across as childlike and not too smart as they bump into each other when crawling into the patch. Still, the group is clever enough to shake the skeletons before merrily feasting away on the melons. Finally, the white men win out, but only after the feast. The inflicted violence is playful and in tune with the film's overall tone as white farmers collectively punish black farmhands and their families.

White filmmakers depicting black people single out watermelons as the most coveted type of food alongside chickens. Scores of films trumpet this "truth" as numerous petty thefts are committed to more or less successfully get such dishes into hungry bellies. In the collective white imagination, taking a stab at understanding the African American imagination, a watermelon patch might present itself as an Elysian field, magnetically

irresistible by harboring a banquet in the making – free of charge. This paradise can therefore be turned into an enticing minefield of scarecrows to fend off unwanted visitors.

In fuller form and by way of a different kind of sustenance than *The Watermelon Patch*, Biograph's *The Chicken Thief* (1904) had previously mixed tracking and chasing in addition to dance scenes in a shack, just like the Edison film later.[34] Yet a later derivation, Lubin's *Fun on the Farm* (1905), merges elements from the chicken and watermelon films, but, due to the producer's German background – allegedly – fails "to master the correct cultural references" by having the thief steal chickens, true to form, but also pumpkins instead of watermelons.[35] This, in Charles Musser's view, turns the film "anarchic" and "unintentionally subversive." Lubin, arriving to the United States in 1876, might have been slow and remiss on the cultural uptake, or shrewd in intentionally substituting pumpkins for watermelons to comedic effect, or perhaps he even stepped up the racism a notch by implying that black people steal indiscriminately, even beyond their stereotypes. Be that as it may, the thief ends up tarred and feathered after a chase.

Unscripted Vigilantism

Pointing to workplace-related hazards for actors when performing in vigilante-style chase films might be in bad taste. John Wade, as a character harassing his wife in Edison's 1905 film *The White Caps*, was tarred and feathered for his crimes by a vigilante group after a chase. Wade was one of the first picture personalities singled out for a write-up in a feature article in a New York daily newspaper.[36] Recounting fragments from his career, he tells the reporter about studio rehearsals for the opening scene in *The White Caps* described as a modern "Bill Sykes story." Wade, "as the brutal husband, returning home intoxicated to beat and strangle his wife … was acting with all the ability he possessed. Directly in the rear of the studio employees of a factory saw the whole performance and, not guessing its significance, made a push for the studio to rescue the supposed unfortunate victim of Mr. Wade's attack. A hurried retreat to a well-barricaded closet

and numerous explanations alone saved Mr. Wade pretty severe handling by the indignant men." Such meta-cinematic interventions attest to a citizen arrest-like readiness of coming to the rescue of (white) women attacked by men. Here the crime had no sexual implications and did not cross any racial boundaries, but the white man is blackened before a second coating of white feathers is applied by white-hooded men in a shaming punishment of a scoundrel outside the formal legal machinery. The final scene, featuring Wade tarred and feathered and paraded for final humiliation after the chase, caused quite a stir when shot in a small New Jersey town. Citizens alerted the sheriff and the company was arrested until matters were straightened out.

Conclusion

Skin takes on cultural color when read within the American narrative of chase films and punishment endings. Dark complexions can be black enough for true Anglo-Saxons and simultaneously truly white for African American audiences. Regardless of how race and gender are played up, American chase films cannot be dislodged historiographically from the precincts of vigilante justice and lynching.

Cinema's evocation of the spectacular, from the obnoxious to the bewitching, ushered in a mass appeal for film technology, not least by way of the chase model. At a critical media juncture, Spears' Kinetoscope sketch, irony apart, represents a significant delineation of the cultural logic of lynching in the age of mechanical reproduction. "No pen – no tongue can fully portray these horrors," Irenas J. Palmer wrote in 1902.[37] Celebrating the rapacious gaze of the film camera, Spears in his mock proposal similarly feared that the lynching experience might be depleted in the process of "translation" and thus fail to fully immerse virtual mob members in front of screens across America.

Spears' elaborate spin anticipates Walter Benjamin's contention with respect to spectatorship, namely that cinema tends to exorcise the horrific and paper over shocks by normalizing even the most unspeakable acts. In this sense, cinema can capture what Palmer's pen and tongue cannot fully

formulate, but mechanical reproduction simultaneously risks turning horror into something less horrific and mundane rather than spectacular. This conundrum underpins Spears' reflections on "zest" and profilmic strategies. In Spears' masquerade, modernity's premier technology for dislocating and for distributing cultural practices was to instructively embed vigilante violence within the larger fabric of American civilization. A few years later, Lester Walton's indictment of the moving picture theater as a degenerate institution, after having been confronted with film posters for a lynching reconstruction, speaks volumes as a non-ironic antidote to racism and screen vigilantism.[38] As I have argued here, American chase films, in turn, moved in tandem with this facet of American history.

Notes

1 From the London edition of *Vanity Fair*; reprinted in *The Chicago Defender*, November 16, 1912, 5.

2 T. P. M., "His Change of Front," *Puck* 70, no. 1798 (August 16, 1911): 5.

3 *Washington Post*, May 25, 1909, 3.

4 *Chicago Tribune*, December 18, 1911, 10.

5 Maria Su Wang, "'Mob': English," in *Crowds*, eds. Jeffrey T. Schnapp and Matthew Tiews (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 186–91. For a historical account of the semantics and pragmatics of the term lynching, see Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

6 Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

7 Ibid.; Ken Gonzales-Day, *Lynching in the West, 1850–1935* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Jacqueline Goldsby, *A Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Matthew Bernstein, *Screening a Lynching: The Leo Frank Case on Film and Television* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

8 Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990); Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900–1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Jane Gaines, *Fire and Desire: Mixed-Race Movies in the Silent Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Pearl Bowser, Jane Gaines, and Charles Musser, eds., *Oscar Micheaux and His Circle: African-American Filmmaking and Race Cinema of the Silent Era* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

9 John Randolph Spears, "A Suggestion," *New York Times*, October 8, 1905, 6.

10 For an overview of French chase films, see Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 109–17.

11 Jonathan Auerbach, "Chasing Film Narrative: Repetition, Recursion, and the Body in Early Cinema," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (2000): 798–820; André Gaudreault, "1904–1905: Movies and Chasing the Missing Link(s)," in *American Cinema, 1890–1909: Themes and Variations*, ed. André Gaudreault (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 133–57.

12 Abel, *Ciné Goes to Town*, 109–17; Tom Gunning, "1902–1903: Movies, Stories, and Attractions," in Gaudreault, *American Cinema*, 112–32.

13 Gaudreault, "1904–1905."

14 Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*, 352.

15 Statistics from the archives of the Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee University, Alabama.

16 Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and Its Meanings, 1619 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 167.

17 "Licenses Are Wanted By Negro Operator," *Atlanta Constitution*, April 23, 1913, 16.

18 "Fort Worth Mob Harries Negroes," *Atlanta Constitution*, February 28, 1911, 1.

19 “The Color Line,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 1908, sec. I, 2.

20 “Trim Little Woman Chasing a Thief Is Joined by Many,” *Atlanta Constitution*, December 18, 1913, 8.

21 Spears, “A Suggestion.”

22 John Randolph Spears, *The American Slave-Trade: An Account of Its Origin, Growth and Suppression* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1900).

23 “Mob Votes on Way to Lynch,” *New York Sun*, September 8, 1905, 1; “Texas Mob Burns Negro at the Stake,” *New York Times*, September 8, 1905, 6; “Negro Burned at the Stake,” *Palestine Daily Herald*, September 9, 1905, 2.

24 Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 115.

25 William Jones, “Harry Buckwalter: Pioneer Colorado Filmmaker,” *Film History* 4, no. 2 (1990): 89–100. See also David Emrich, Hollywood, *Colorado: The Selig Polyscope Company and the Colorado Motion Picture Company* (Lakewood: Post Modern, 1997), 14–16.

26 Chris Lane is credited with playing “the leading part in the lynching affair” in an article signed by William N. Selig, “Cutting Back: Reminiscences of the Early Days,” *Photoplay* 17, no. 3 (1920): 43–6 and 130; esp. 45.

27 *Cripple Creek Times*, April 10, 1904, 6.

28 “Bloodhound Chase in Cripple Creek,” *Victor Daily Record*, April 8, 1904, 2. A short notice published two days later confirmed that the film was shot on April 9: “Thrilling Pictures,” *Victor Daily Record*, April 10, 1904, 2.

29 “Negroes Excited,” *Prescott Morning Courier*, July 21, 1904, 3.

30 Wash Edwards was targeted when the film was shown in Cripple Creek at the Palm Theater under the title *A Lynching Bee in Cripple Creek*. See “Wash Edwards Has Alibi,” *Cripple Creek Times*, July 22, 1904, 8. Another account was published the day before in conjunction with a screening at Stratton Park, Colorado Springs: “Wash Edwards Was Armed,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, July 21, 1904, 5. The film had apparently been screened several times before at Stratton Park under different titles: *Lynched Without Trial* and *Hanging Without a Trial*.

31 “Negroes Applaud Lynching,” *Washington Post*, January 20, 1906, 1.

32 Gaudreault, “1904–1905,” 155–7.

33 Edison Circular no. 268, October 24, 1905.

34 On this topic, see Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*, 380–1.

35 Ibid., 396.

36 “How It Feels to Be a Moving Picture Hero,” *The World* (New York), July 14, 1907, sec. SM, 4.

37 Irenas J. Palmer, *The Black Man’s Burden; or, The Horrors of Southern Lynchings* (Olean: Olean Herald Print, 1902), 31.

38 Lester Walton, “The Degeneracy of the Motion Picture Theater,” *New York Age*, August 5, 1909, 6. For a discussion of Walton’s essay, see Anna Everett, *Returning the Gaze: A Genealogy of Black Film Criticism, 1909–1949* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 18.

15

“The Knowledge Which Comesin Pictures”

Educational Films and Early Cinema Audiences

Jennifer Peterson

Early cinema in the United States was long mythologized as an entertainment form for immigrants and the working poor. Although several generations of critics writing on silent cinema before the late 1970s (such as Gilbert Seldes, Lewis Jacobs, and Garth Jowett) may have perpetuated the idealization of early cinema as a democratic social utopia, the myth was actually forged during the early cinema period itself.[1] Labor writer Mary Heaton Vorse summed up the myth in 1911, writing: “You cannot go to any one of the picture shows in New York without having a series of touching little adventures with the people who sit near you, without overhearing chance words of a *naïveté* and appreciation that makes you bless the living picture book that has brought so much into the lives of the people who work.”[2] Judith Thissen has characterized this type of idealization as “the founding myth of Hollywood’s democratic nature.”[3]

Since the Brighton revolution of 1978, film historians have been challenging this myth.[4] Scholars have variously argued that early cinema was frequented by more middle-class patrons than originally thought, or that immigrant and working-class spectators did indeed comprise the bulk of early cinema audiences in urban locations, albeit in a more complex way

than the original mythology indicated, or that attention to non-urban audiences can expand our understanding of early cinema spectatorship.[5] Perhaps more than anything, this revisionist research reveals that it is difficult to fix the identity of early cinema audiences, and perhaps impossible to generalize about different kinds of audiences in different locations, much less know what they thought about the films they saw.

In the rush to track down elusive empirical research about early film audiences watching fiction films, scholars have mostly neglected the different mode of address that early non-fiction films presented to early cinema audiences. As the archival discoveries of the 1990s and 2000s have demonstrated, non-fiction or "educational" subjects such as travel films, science films, industrials, nature films, and so forth constituted a significant – if minority – share of screen time in the early cinema period.[6] Modeled after reformist notions of cultural "uplift," these films complicate our understanding of early cinema spectatorship. To be sure, interest in early non-fiction has been growing, as the appearance of several new publications attests.[7] But in the beginning years of the rediscovery of early cinema, non-fiction film garnered just a mention here and there. Noël Burch, who viewed early cinema as a "populist cinema," approached non-fiction as an open question: "how are we to explain the craze for 'actuality' cinema, for the 'scenic,' typical of the 'enlightened' bourgeoisie *all over the then industrialized world?*"[8] In Burch's estimation, non-fiction subjects appealed only to an educated, middle-class audience. Charles Musser later made a more sustained yet similar argument about the actuality film programs of traveling exhibitor Lyman Howe, arguing that the "high-class" appeal of Howe's shows should be understood as "a cinema of reassurance": "Nothing critical enters this view of America. All is right within a screen world where all fill their designated roles."[9]

In these accounts, a contradiction arises between early cinema's mythic status as a populist form of "cheap amusement" versus the early non-fiction film's purportedly "genteel" appeal. I question this binary opposition, arguing that although the early film industry may have touted educational subjects as the antidote to early cinema's bad reputation, non-fiction films were not simply reassuring or solely bourgeois in their appeal, but instead

were characterized by unpredictability and fluidity of meaning. In this chapter, I outline the campaign to promote educational films in commercial motion picture theaters in the early 1910s. I locate non-fiction's designated role as a form of "educational" cinema in the discourse of the day (and discuss the different meanings of "non-fiction" and "educational"), arguing that although the film industry appropriated the Progressive Era discourse of social "uplift," in fact the industry was adopting a compromise position that attempted to chart a middle course between commerce and reform. Ultimately, commercial interests won out, and the early educational film did not yield the commercial bonanza some had hoped for. Instead, educational films found a home in schools, where new distribution circuits were established around small-gauge film stocks such as 28 mm and eventually 16 mm, which debuted in 1923. Moreover, as I shall show by analyzing two extant films from the period, "educational" films of this era did not necessarily serve the ideology of middle-class reform, but instead were open to a range of responses from early film audiences.

Not every audience was occupied with reading films against the grain, of course, and here questions of audience and exhibition context become paramount. Research on film spectatorship has constituted an important wing of film studies since the late 1980s, but it is notoriously difficult, particularly in the early cinema period. As Susan J. Douglas has put it, "[w]e will always know more about the motives and assumptions of the producers of media images and messages – including their assumptions about the audience – than we will about the audience itself."[10] There are several possible approaches to reception studies, but each has its limitations. One can analyze the films themselves for their representational techniques and mode of address, as I will do below, but this approach can only yield informed speculation about how viewers *might* have actually received the films. Another pitfall of this method is that it becomes tempting for the critic to produce his or her own historically contingent interpretations of the films – what Carlo Ginzburg calls "physiognomic" readings, which do not necessarily yield new insights about a distant age.[11] A second approach analyzes the early film trade press and other contemporary published sources for their accounts of actual scenes of spectatorship, which are rare, or for their attempts to construct an "ideal

spectator," which are abundant but replete with clichés (envisioning spectators as children, or spectators as good and humble immigrants). A third method analyzes actual spectator responses to films, but these are almost non-existent in the early cinema period, so this is the least likely strategy here.

A fourth solution to the difficulty of researching early film audiences has been to focus on individual case studies of ethnic and racial moviegoing experiences in specific geographical locations, such as Judith Thissen's work on the filmgoing practices of Eastern European Jews in New York's Lower East Side, Giorgio Bertellini's work on Italian immigrants living in New York City, or Alison Griffiths and James Latham's work on African American filmgoing in Harlem.[12] All of this work is exemplary, but it is necessarily limited in scope to a particular audience group and location – and as this list of articles shows, research on early cinema audiences has tended to focus on cities, particularly New York City. Mary Carbine's work on film exhibition for African American audiences on the South Side of Chicago and J. L. Lindstrom's work on nickelodeons in downtown Chicago demonstrate some of the wide variation in movie exhibition and attendance in different cities.[13] Gregory Waller's work on the exhibition practices of Lexington, Kentucky offers an alternative view of moviegoing in a smaller, Southern city.[14] More recently, Jan Olsson's work has begun to map cinema exhibition in Los Angeles in the years before Hollywood.[15] In all of this work, information about exhibition has been easier to gather than research on reception. After all, buildings and commerce leave many traces, while audiences leave very few. Moreover, although this work offers rich information about local communities, it does not offer the broader explanatory scope that a genre-focused analysis can afford.

Concurrent with the original myth about *who* was in the audience, in the early cinema period there were two contradictory myths about *what* motion pictures were doing to this audience: cinema was said to be either a negative force for moral corruption or a positive force for education and "Americanization." The reformist and disciplinary efforts that were made in response to the first idea have been well addressed by recent historiography, which has tracked the early reputation of nickelodeon theaters as "dens of

vice" and the response of the film industry to distance itself from these accusations. William Uricchio and Roberta Pearson have analyzed the Vitagraph "Quality Films" of 1908–12 (Shakespeare, historical, and biblical subjects), as part of the American film industry's efforts to "distance itself from forces perceived as disruptive … while seeking to ally with the emerging mainstream mass culture."[16] More recently, Lee Grieveson has shown some of the many ways censorship and regulation shaped early cinema's discursive practices, in particular arguing that "[t]he reformation of cinema was tied together … with the reformation of masculinity and, following that, domesticity."[17]

But this instrumental work on early cinema reform has focused on fiction film, leaving aside the important role that non-fiction played in the film industry's drive to redefine itself as a respectable form of entertainment in the nickelodeon era. Moreover, the repressive forces of censorship in the early film industry have received more attention than that other wing of reform discourse that embraced cinema as a positive force in the new realm of visual education. Grieveson does acknowledge the important rhetoric of education in early cinema, arguing that this rhetoric was one of "three principal strategies" utilized by the film industry "to sever cinema's associations with 'vice'" (along with self-regulation and the reformation of masculinity by providing an alternative to the saloon).[18] Grieveson does not consider, however, any non-fiction subjects such as nature films, science films, or scenic films, instead choosing to focus on the "uplift dramatic films" of the day, along with boxing films (which are certainly non-fiction subjects, but which circulated quite differently from these other non-fiction genres).

In fact, there was a concerted effort on the part of certain figures in the early American film industry to promote educational films in commercial nickelodeon theaters, particularly during the years 1910–13.[19] Outside the commercial theaters, traveling exhibitors such as Lyman Howe and Burton Holmes were also important purveyors of educational cinema; these exhibitors were in some ways the vanguard of the educational film movement, even if they saw themselves as businessmen and entertainers rather than educators. Efforts were also made to show films in schools,

although these screenings were sporadic in the early 1910s, and did not become widespread until the early 1920s when a distinct distribution network for non-theatrical films was established.[20] Indeed, another difficulty of researching early educational films is their varied exhibition contexts: commercial moving picture houses, schools, public halls, private homes, churches, businesses, trains, and ships, to name a few. Janet Staiger has argued that for film, "context is more significant than textual features in explaining interpretive events."[21] In other words, place, time, and exhibition context arguably affect film spectatorship as much as the film itself. More than early fiction films, the same educational films were regularly shown in different kinds of exhibition spaces and reused over a period of many years, effectively rendering the films a different experience depending on the type of venue in which they were shown.

Unlike the first accounts of early cinema, which idealized it as an Arcadia for immigrants and the working class, and somewhat differently than recent analyses focusing on censorship, which tend to read early cinema as an overwhelmingly repressive institution, I argue that attention to the "uplift" dimension of social progress discourse allows us to expand our understanding of the forces shaping cinema and its audiences at the time. This uplift discourse, which particularly coalesced around educational cinema, expands and complicates our understanding of what Lee Grieveson has called the "mode of regulation" in early cinema.[22] Municipal and state censor boards certainly played a dominant role in these regulatory efforts, but the ideology and strategy behind the campaign to reform early cinema was not monolithic. Uplift discourse, including even the rhetoric of "Americanization," had both repressive and potentially liberating functions in early cinema. As Miriam Hansen has shown, one of the strategies for defending silent-era cinema against censorship was to define it as a kind of "new universal language" that emphasized "egalitarianism, internationalism, and the progress of civilization through technology."[23] As Hansen explains, film's non-verbal means of communication was thought to be particularly useful for the "Americanization" of immigrants. The logic of film as a "new universal language" runs very close to the rhetoric of those who praised educational films for their visual immediacy, as we shall see.

Moreover, while uplift discourse and the educational film movement can be understood as participants in early cinema's regulatory mode, the films themselves were in no way guaranteed to produce the pious and patriotic responses they were meant to encourage. Early non-fiction films may have been intended for sober purposes of education and assimilation, as abundant documentation in the motion picture trade press attests, but the actual films, as well as their actual audiences, were more heterogeneous than reformers may have liked to admit.

The Campaign to Promote Educational Films, 1910–13

In January 1912, *Moving Picture World* remarked upon a change of opinion about cinema in the mainstream press. "It is beginning to appear now that the press is everywhere taking up the beneficial side of the moving picture."[24] This praise was "in striking contrast to their former adverse criticisms," the journal later explained.[25] *Moving Picture World* ascribed this public change of heart to a new appreciation of the educational force of cinema. This appreciation of cinema's educational potential, "though tardy, is still timely," the journal stated, taking care to credit itself with first promoting the concept: "It will interest the readers of this page to know that nothing appears in the excellent article in 'Munsey's' but that which has already appeared here many times in one form or another."[26]

In fact, despite its undisguised self-promotional rhetoric, *Moving Picture World* was correct in detecting a favorable change of opinion in the popular press in early 1912. Although articles praising educational moving pictures had been published before, these had been restricted to the trade press. Now the mainstream press was getting interested. The Hearst newspaper chain, for example, ran an editorial in its papers in November 1911 entitled, "Show Children the Real World: The Moving Picture – The Great Educator of the Future." This article lays forth what was already becoming an important argument for the motion picture industry: the idea that images are better educators than words. "What we see is forever stamped on the mind,"

the editorial explained. “All children and a great majority of adults dislike and instinctively push away knowledge which comes to them in written form. Yet the whole human race greedily accepts the knowledge which comes in pictures.… When the picture is accompanied by motion, by action which intensifies its reality, the educational power of the picture is absolute.”[27] This argument about the superiority of moving pictures for visual education was to become a cornerstone of the film industry’s legitimization campaign in the early teens.

The groundswell of mainstream attention to cinema’s educational potential in late 1911 and early 1912 was a result of several years of effort already undertaken by certain figures in the film industry, in particular George Kleine. Educational films were produced, imported, and exhibited in the United States in the nickelodeon era (roughly 1907–15) in larger numbers than has been generally acknowledged. Chicago-based film distributor George Kleine was the most important importer of non-fiction films from Europe – he distributed films from the UK-based Charles Urban Trading Company beginning in 1907, and by 1908 he was also distributing films from a dozen other European production firms, including Gaumont and Urban-Eclipse, two companies that manufactured a great many non-fiction subjects. By his own estimate, during the years 1909–13, Kleine’s company imported between 20 and 50 prints each of 385 different educational film titles, which means that he distributed roughly 12,000–19,000 prints of foreign educational subjects to commercial theaters in the United States.[28] In addition to these films from Europe, most American film companies were also producing at least some non-fiction subjects. At this time, non-fiction films were typically released as part of a split reel with a comedy or a drama.

The term “educational” was still being defined, but it primarily referred to what we now call non-fiction subjects. George Kleine wrote in a 1909 letter to Charles Urban, “[i]t is the intention of the Motion Picture Patents Co. to give a liberal interpretation to the word educational, but in no case are dramatic, sensational, comedy or other films of that character to be included.”[29] The proliferation of non-fiction genres in early cinema is striking; a list of some of the categories in *The Nickelodeon*’s regular

column “Record of Current Films” includes: Scenic, Sports, Nature Study, Trick, Scientific, Topical, Industrial, Acrobatic, and Historical. Non-fiction films were inconsistently classified: all of these categories were not always listed, and film classifications appear unstable – for example, the label “scenic,” which usually indicates a travel film, was sometimes applied to other kinds of actuality titles such as *Un hôpital pour petits animaux* (*Hospital for Small Animals*, Éclair, 1910) or *The Chicago Stock Yards Fire* (Imp, 1911) both of which were listed in the trade press as scenics, but which might have been classified as topical films, judging from their titles.[30] Despite these inconsistencies, what is clear is that generic classifications proliferated around non-fiction, while fiction films, in-contrast, were divided simply into Drama and Comedy categories (although Drama and Comedy were more numerous than non-fiction titles).[31]

In this essay, I use “non-fiction” and “educational” as more or less interchangeable terms, but I do not mean this to imply an imprecise equation of all non-fiction categories. In fact, “non-fiction” is a contemporary term, used by today’s film scholars, whereas “educational” was the preferred term for such films in the 1910s. Along these lines, Kleine’s assertion that an educational subject is simply anything that is not fiction needs some clarification. First of all, the opposition between fiction and non-fiction, one of the more rigidly observed distinctions of classical cinema, was not always clearly drawn in the early film era; many hybrid films combined non-fiction elements with a fictionalized narrative, such as Edwin S. Porter’s well-known film, *The European Rest Cure* (Edison, 1904).[32] In addition, several important early feature documentary films used a quasi-ethnographic framework to integrate fiction with non-fiction: Edward S. Curtis’s *In the Land of the Head-Hunters* (1914) and Robert Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* (1922) are the most famous of these. Given that the term “documentary” was not well established (in English) until after John Grierson introduced the concept in 1926, it seems worthwhile to emphasize early non-fiction cinema’s difference from the later, more well-known feature-length documentary framework.[33]

By October 1911 *Motography* had begun separating non-fiction out from its regular film review section, “Recent Films Reviewed,” creating a new

column entitled “Current Educational Releases.” “Educational” was an umbrella term that gathered together all kinds of non-fiction, including scenics, industrials, and topical films, under its mantle, as this column demonstrates. And yet confusing the picture is the fact that these other, more specific categories did not disappear once the “educational” category gained traction; instead, they all stood alongside each other well into the 1910s. To make things even more complicated, although some non-fiction categories – such as sports films and topical films (the term used to designate news films before 1915) – might seem to us today to contain very little “educational” material in the sense of a traditional school curriculum, these too were promoted in the educational section of the trade press. For example, *The Joining of the Oceans – the Panama Canal, October, 1913* (Edison), classified as a topical, is described in *Motography*’s “Current Educational Releases” column.[34] When weekly news serials such as the *Hearst-Selig News Pictorial* began to appear in 1914, these were finally described in a different section of the trade press (in *Motography* they appeared before the fiction films under “Brief Stories of the Week’s Film Releases”), but additionally, in different sections of the trade journals, these continued to be listed for some time as topicals alongside less “newsreel”-sounding titles.[35]

As certain non-fiction genres were beginning to be labeled “educational,” it might seem puzzling that earlier distinctions between scenic, industrial, and topical persisted. I would suggest, however, that the educational label was a nascent attempt to differentiate non-fiction from fiction. And as I have been arguing, the educational category was also a marketing tactic, the film industry’s attempt to capitalize on the educational rhetoric used by reformers. While not all non-fiction was necessarily “educational” in a traditional sense, much of it was promoted as such at the time, which is precisely my point: these films did not always embody what the champions of educational cinema seemed to promise. More than a description of any actual educational function, perhaps the category “educational” should simply stand as one film industry development on the way to the Griersonian model of theatrical documentary film that emerged in the late 1920s.

Although it was short-lived, the efforts of the commercial motion picture industry to promote educational films for *theatrical* venues were systematic enough to constitute a movement between 1910 and 1913. Several important developments in the film industry's nascent educational film movement took place in the early 1910s. Kleine published his influential *Catalogue of Educational Moving Pictures* in April 1910. *Moving Picture World* began its regular column "In the Educational Field" on January 21, 1911, while its Chicago-based competitor, *Motography*, began its own column "Current Educational Releases" in October 1911, as previously mentioned. Kleine's *Catalogue* and the columns in *Moving Picture World* and *Motography* were all focused on promoting educational films in commercial moving picture theaters. In this era in which the future of cinema was unclear, Kleine was not alone in thinking that educational films might have a bright economic future. According to *Motography*, one exhibitor exclaimed in 1911, "[p]ut on an educational film and advertise it and crowds will flock to your theater, while the fellow across the street, who is running blood-and-thunder stuff, will have a slim crowd."[36] Such statements were common in the trade press during these years.

Of course, *Motography* and *Moving Picture World* must be understood as publications whose purpose was to promote the film industry. As such, the overwhelming presence of reform discourse and articles praising educational films in these journals is not representative of actually existing conditions, but of the film industry's own desire to ally itself with the powerful forces of legitimate culture. Even though *Motography* was careful to print on its Table of Contents page, "This publication is free and independent of all business or house connections or control. No manufacturer or supply dealer, or their stockholders or its representatives, have any financial interest in *Motography* or any voice in its management or policy," it was clearly engaged in the business of promoting the industry at large, and one of its strategies for doing so was to regularly implore producers and exhibitors to uplift their film shows. *Motography*'s more well-known rival, the New York-based *Moving Picture World*, pursued a similar strategy of uplift, issuing proclamations such as, "The MOVING PICTURE WORLD sincerely believes that the educational branch of the film industry will before long, rival the amusement branch in extent and

importance."[37] The policy of promoting educational films extended to the top of the hierarchy at this journal: when, in March 1912, *Moving Picture World*'s editor James P. Chalmers suffered an untimely death by falling down an elevator shaft on his way to the Motion Picture Exhibitor's League of America convention in Dayton, Ohio, the journal was prompted to praise its late proprietor for his support of educational films. "He was a lover of the educational pictures and in company with [this] writer visited many manufacturers with the purpose of impressing upon them the great and permanent value of the educational film."[38]

Alongside these industry efforts to promote educational films in commercial theaters, there were also some important gestures made toward placing films in schools in the early 1910s. Kleine stopped importing Gaumont films in 1912, when that company set up its own US distribution outlet through the Independent circuit, and in April 1913 Gaumont explicitly targeted schools with its advertisement, "MOTION PICTURES FOR Schools, Colleges, and Churches" distributed through its educational department.[39] More famously, in 1911 Thomas Edison began proclaiming that films would soon replace books in schools, with statements such as: "The moving picture art will largely supplement the art of printing for the transmission and diffusion of knowledge."[40] In 1913, Edison hosted a demonstration of his new series of educational moving pictures for prominent educators at his laboratory in West Orange, New Jersey. Staged like a classic Edison publicity event, the demonstration garnered coverage in the popular press with a series of articles in *The Survey*.[41]

As the industry began shifting toward multi-reel features, however, the push to promote educational films as commercial subjects began to run its course. By July 1914, a *Motography* columnist wrote that the "puny, inadequate supply of educationals that did exist [had] dwindled; or, rather, the dramatic releases soon increased in number and glory at a pace which soon left the little split-reel educational buried in oblivion." This writer went on to explain that educationals have "never really had a fair show," announcing with excitement the release of Éclair's new "Scientia" series of educational films.[42] Educational films were indeed released with regularity until the distribution of films from Europe was disrupted by the outbreak of

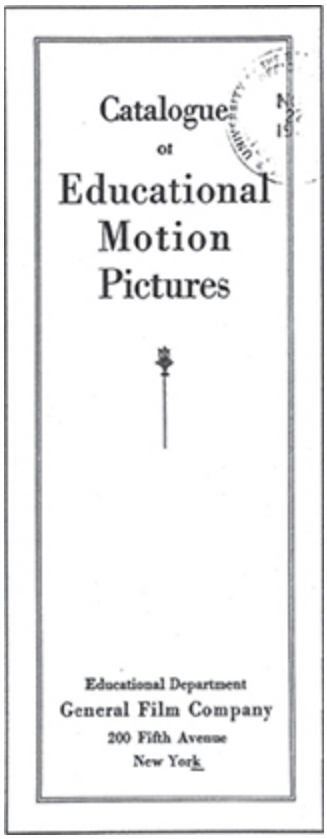
World War I in fall 1914, and they continued to appear with less frequency from European and American manufacturers throughout the 1910s. The earnest campaign to promote them within the industry had effectively died out by 1914, however. Newsreels emerged as a significant new form of non-fiction in the mid-1910s, receiving a boost due to their role in the documentation of World War I, but this development of a distinct non-fiction genre only underscores the demise of the general-purpose educational film that was promoted before 1914.[43]

Although the campaign to promote educational cinema in commercial theaters was brief and not the financial boon Kleine and others had hoped for, the campaign to promote visual education in schools had much greater success and longevity. Even the Motion Picture Patents Company got in on the act. It is well known that the MPPC was interested in more than just limiting competition and controlling the industry; it also made a show of pledging its allegiance to the mission of social uplift. Indeed, one of the MPPC's slogans was "Moral, Educational, and Cleanly Amusing."[44] As mentioned above, the MPPC strove "to give a liberal interpretation to the word educational."[45] In order to encourage the dissemination of educational films, the MPPC did not subject these titles to the same rental restrictions as other kinds of film: in addition to being regularly released to licensed theaters alongside fiction films, they could also be delivered to unlicensed lecturers or schools.[46] The MPPC strove to influence not only film content but also exhibition by requiring that licensed theaters be "clean, well ventilated, well lit, and safe."[47] Grieveson has traced the close relationship between the Patents Company and the New York Board of Censorship in 1909.[48] This organization, largely staffed by volunteer women reformers, became the National Board of Censorship in May of that year. One of its members, in fact, went on to play an important role in the MPPC's promotion of educational films in schools.

The General Film Company (GFC), the distribution arm of the MPPC founded in May 1910, formed an Educational Department in fall 1911, which was headed by Ruth Gould Dolesé, a former member of the National Board of Censorship. The GFC's Educational Department issued a *Catalogue of Educational Motion Pictures* in December 1911 (see Figure

15.1).[49] At this time George Kleine was vice-president of the General Film Co. Kleine had sold his film exchanges to the GFC in 1910, and the GFC's catalogue shares the same title as Kleine's 1910 *Catalogue of Educational Motion Pictures*. It also contains some of the same films, but its organization is quite different.

Figure 15.1 The General Film Company's Educational Catalogue, compiled by Ruth G. Dolesé, 1911.



Although the GFC's *Catalogue of Educational Motion Pictures* lists no author, Dolesé is credited with compiling the *Catalogue* in several articles in the trade press at the time. Dolesé, who was apparently French (she is occasionally referred to as "Mme. R. G. Dolesé" or "Madame Dolesé"), granted interviews and wrote articles praising educational motion pictures in 1911 and 1912, and regularly repeated educational cinema's commitment to uplift and social reform. She explained, "[t]here are plenty who never travel beyond the boundary of their home State, but who, going to a motion picture theater, come away impressed and amazed by a street scene of a great metropolis with its masses of humanity, cars and vehicles rushing here

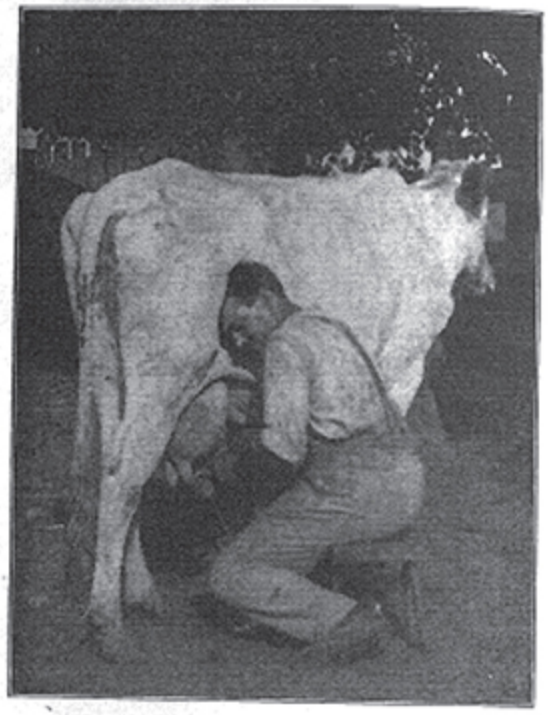
and there. Their minds have been opened to a new and wonderful train of thought."[50] In another interview she argued that travel films were valuable for giving their viewers "a feeling of sympathy and fellowship with the peoples of the great world that will broaden their outlook on life, give them higher ideals of duty, and have a powerful influence in bringing nearer that 'brotherhood of man' the idealists for ages have striven to obtain."[51] Dolesé's words echo a particular strain of reform rhetoric that strove to depict film as a progressive new universal language. These utopian sentiments were not necessarily borne out in practice, but they indicate the burden of expectations some reformers had for educational films.

As a representative of licensed film exchanges, the GFC's *Catalogue* contains only those films released by licensed companies, but the list (see Figure 15.2) includes many familiar names of travelogues, industrials, and other educational subjects that had been regular releases just a year or two before, including Charles Urban's *The Fly Pest* (1910) and the Pathé film *Le Champignon, sa culture, sa croissance* [*Mushroom Culture*, 1911] which I will discuss below. Films are listed by title only; production company and release year are not mentioned. Films are classified under topics such as Religion, Sociology, Natural Science, Useful Arts, Fine Arts, Literature, and History. Scenic films, classified as "Geography and Travel," are listed by region, beginning with Europe and moving to Asia and Africa, then moving to a category labeled "Indians" which apparently signifies North America, and finally concluding with South America. A section at the back of the catalogue entitled "Suggestions as to how motion pictures may be applied to school work" lists film programs that can work with established curricula, and indeed, Dolesé explained in an interview that "I cover practically the same ground as the schools."[52]

One year after the GFC's Educational Department was established, *Moving Picture World* reported that its *Catalogue* had been a financial success. W. Steven Bush wrote, "I am glad to add that Mrs. Dolese [*sic*] does not regard the financial success as the real touchstone or as the full scope of her great undertaking. To be sure, she is immensely pleased that the department has stood so practical a test, but she looks far beyond mere financial gains. The most valuable mission this department has fulfilled in

the one brief year of its existence has been its propaganda among the best classes of the country.… It has disarmed criticism and conquered prejudice … where before … the moving picture was held in small esteem."[53] Even as its possibly exaggerated financial success was touted, the *Catalogue*'s function in raising cinema's cultural capital was singled out for the highest praise.

Figure 15.2 The General Film Company's Educational Catalogue, pp. 20–1.



From the Field to the Cradle 637
Milk industry traced from farmer's field and barn to the ultimate consumer—our baby. 10 *Minutes*

Making of Honey 638
Film portrays the activities of that wonderfully efficient and industrious little creature—the bee. 10 *Minutes*

Honey Industry in France 638
Shows the methods of the thrifty French in operating an important line of business. 10 *Minutes*

Catching Fish with Dynamite 639
Showing scenes in Melanese life, and a fishing expedition in activity. 10 *Minutes*

Cormorants 639
Curious methods adopted by Japanese aboriginals; illustrating ingenuity of half-civilized people. 10 *Minutes*

Fishing Industry in Gloucester 639
Different phases of this old industry, from the time the ship leaves Gloucester. 15 *Minutes*

Oyster Industry 639
Processes from fishing through to various manipulations by which this bivalve reaches market. 10 *Minutes*

Whale Fishing 639
Strenuous and hazardous enterprise, additionally interesting because the industry is decadent. 10 *Minutes*

Herring Fishing Off Boulogne 639
Scenically attractive as well as interesting in treatment, this industry is carefully portrayed. 10 *Minutes*

Life of a Salmon 639
Canyon of Calilano, near Vancouver, B. C., the catching of the salmon and delivery to the cannery. 15 *Minutes*

Sardine Industry 639
Fishermen mending nets; casting nets; process of canning; and finally the consumer. 15 *Minutes*

Opening an Oyster 639
Showing an oyster fleet; picturesque fishermen gathering oysters for market. 10 *Minutes*

Catching the Deep Sea Turtle 639
Shows how they catch the turtles in the Caribbean Sea. One of the turtles weighs 210 pounds. 10 *Minutes*

Angling in Norway 639
Methods used by the sea-loving Scandinavian in snaring fish. 10 *Minutes*

Sponge Fisheries 639
Shows processes by which this water product is converted into profitable article of commerce. 10 *Minutes*

Astrakhan Fisheries 639
Gives especial methods used by these fishermen in pursuit of their arduous trade. 10 *Minutes*

Tunny Fishing Off Palermo 639
How these delectable fish are captured to supply man's larder. 10 *Minutes*

Wool Industry in Austria 646.13
Native methods used in a most profitable industry that has been long operated. 10 *Minutes*

Making Artificial Flowers 646.17
Showing delicate manipulations in the development of marvelous imitations of nature. 15 *Minutes*

Ostrich Plume Industry in France 646.17
Interesting process in one of the most profitable forms of industry. 10 *Minutes*

A Visit to a Public Nursery 649.1
Operations in detail of a day nursery. Boon to poor mothers.

According to Arthur Edwin Krows's exhaustive history of non-theatrical film published in installments from 1936 to 1944, "Motion Pictures – Not For Theaters," Dolesé may have been the head of the GFC's Educational Department, but the management of the department was handled by one Louis R. De Lorme. Krows explains that the Educational Department took

old reels of educational films back from the exchanges when they were considered exhausted of their commercial value, and rented them to schools, churches, and clubs. Krows argues that the activities of this Educational Department were undertaken "primarily to engender good will in public relations."[54] Krows also maintains that "To General Film the enterprise remained just a form of salvage and an encouragement to theatergoers; but to old De Lorme it was much more."[55] When the General Film Company dissolved in 1915, De Lorme acquired a large library of its educational films and formed the Public Educational Film Company, which he soon sold and which was then sold again. One conclusion to be gleaned from the fate of these films is that educational subjects had a long shelf life; they could be reused and redistributed to schools for years on end, their audience share perhaps small but guaranteed.

Spectators and Educational Films

At present, it is possible only to construct fragmentary and speculative accounts of early educational film spectatorship. Given that their experiences were almost never recorded, the actual responses of early film audiences are difficult if not impossible to ascertain. When writers did occasionally report on scenes of reception, their descriptions tend to be brief, focusing on aspects other than the audience's experience. For example, a series of educational moving picture exhibitions was given in Brooklyn schools in late November 1911, but the account in *Moving Picture World* does not mention the schools at which the shows took place, nor does it list the film titles shown. Its description of the audience is perfunctory: "The attendance varied from twelve hundred to nineteen hundred, according to the size of the auditoriums used, in each case the full number of seats being used, and still larger buildings could have been filled. Every proper care was taken to observe lawful conditions. Parents accompanied their children; authorities used every safeguard, so that any mishap seemed impossible."[56] This writer seems more interested in asserting the safety and propriety of the exhibition than giving any specific details about the film show or its audience.

Even though historians today want to know about early film audiences, for the most part we are left only with the films that remain. Although they were shown in some classrooms, early educational films were not made for particular classroom grades, but for general audiences. This one-size-fits-all model was still true even in the 1920s, when a full-fledged educational distribution network for schools had been established. As one writer put it in 1926, "[p]ictures are not as easily assigned to specific grades as are books; the gradation should be done by the teacher in handling the picture; the kinds of questions and supplementary facts which she uses will depend on the age and ability of the child. The same picture may be used with a fifth grade child and a high school graduate, but the treatment will be entirely different."[57] Given that we lack scripts or recordings of these different live "treatments" of the same film shown to fifth graders and high school students, we are missing the key piece of evidence that would indicate how a given film changed in different showings.

Lacking this evidence, we can at least observe that the simple mode of address in these films has as much to do with the state of education at this time as it does with the state of educational film style. Public schooling was one of the major social achievements of the Progressive Era. In the late nineteenth century, the public high school was an elite training ground for the upper- middle class. In 1890, high school enrollment was only 6.7 percent of the US population. By 1920, high school enrollment had reached 32.3 percent.[58] The public education movement was anchored in ideologies of nationalism and capitalist productivity: education was broadened for the purpose of training better workers, and the new public schools were "designed to prepare boys and girls for jobs in the higher reaches of blue collar labor and the lower echelons of white collar work."[59]As theorists such as Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault have taught us, education is one of the primary means by which a society initiates its citizens into dominant ideologies. Educational cinema may have been a modern form of instruction, but in the end, all that up-to-date technology was driven by a desire to more efficiently train better workers and obedient citizens. But of course, students can always be counted on not to learn their lessons the way they are supposed to.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, cultural studies became known for its method of analyzing texts in terms of their audiences' preferred readings, oppositional readings, or negotiated readings.[60] While gesturing toward a multiplicity of audience responses may have become reflexive by now, it is still important to emphasize this point: audiences could respond to educational films in many different ways. Audience members might identify with the uplift discourse the films implied, and respond as the reformers hoped. Alternatively, they might resist the uplift discourse undergirding the films, and respond as resistant spectators. Or, they might have responded in a range of different ways, their reception negotiated moment-by-moment as the film unfolded on screen.

In contrast to the dualistic model of audiences envisioned in the 1910s (either as dupes of the film or beneficiaries of the film), film scholars in recent decades have argued for a more nuanced understanding of how early film audiences might have interpreted cinema's ideological messages. Audiences not only receive a film's ideological messages, but transform and make use of them for different purposes. While we may lack the empirical data to support it, we can hypothesize that audiences found a myriad of ways to process and negotiate educational cinema's message of uplift. What is fascinating about these films is how different they are from the discourse that surrounds them. In the absence of data about actual audience responses to these films, we are left to analyze how the films themselves speak.

The following two educational titles are from a collection of 28 mm films at the George Eastman House (GEH) in Rochester, New York. 28 mm film stock was introduced in France by Pathé in 1911 under the brand name Pathé Kok, and in the United States in 1914 as Pathéscope. As Anke Mebold and Charles Tepperman have shown, the Pathéscope was marketed in the United States to patrons in the home market, schools, churches, clubs, and businesses. Pathéscope films were reduction prints of 35 mm theatrical releases. At first, these titles were almost exclusively French Pathé films, but by mid-1915 some American-made films were also available.[61] I have selected these two films for analysis because they are among the first from the GEH 28 mm collection to be preserved, because they are both exemplary educational films, and because they were found on the same reel at the archive.

The Pathé film *Brise-glace en Finlande* (*Ice Breaking in Finland*) was released in France in November 1909, and classified under the category "scènes de plein air."[62] It was released in the United States as *Breaking Ice in Finland* on July 25, 1910, and listed as an industrial in *The Nickelodeon*'s "Record of Current Films."[63] The trade press regularly printed film descriptions issued by the manufacturing company, along with its own independently written reviews. In this case, *Brise-glace en Finlande* was issued with the following description from Pathé, which appeared in *The Nickelodeon*: "The Port of Helsingfors is in the grip of ice and frost and a wide expanse of frozen water meets the eye, with vessels held fast in the ice. Great ice-breaking vessels swing slowly out of the port, plow through the frozen field and masses of splintered ice fly on either side of the thin furrow of water left in the wake of their stern. The ice-breakers' work is not yet finished, however, for ships caught in the ice have to be assisted and towed back to dock."[64]

The Pathéscope print of the film held by the GEH contains no intertitles and appears to be incomplete, for it does not contain the first and final sections described above showing ships at the Port of Helsingfors and ships being towed back into dock. What the film does show, however, is a series of dramatic shots of giant icebreakers plying the frozen waters. Several ships are pictured stuck in the ice, and two icebreakers are shown coming to the rescue, the *Sampo* and the *Tarmo* (see Figure 15.3) .

These icebreakers billowing smoke would have seemed very modern in 1910 as they easily plied the icy waters that trapped smaller and older vessels. The theme of modern technology meeting primitive nature was a popular one in the early part of the twentieth century, and this film that ostensibly depicts "how things are done" also conveys a distinctly modern confidence about technology's ability to overcome the forces of nature. In so doing, the film presents a vision of progress that mirrors reformist discourse. Viewers might have missed this message, however, instead focusing on the film's depiction of icy landscapes and the graphic spectacle of large ships moving across the screen. One shot, taken from the rear of one of the icebreakers, shows a barren icy landscape receding in the background, bisected by the path just carved in the ice by the ship. Such a

shot might have provoked a range of responses in the spectator, ranging from awe at technology to awe at nature. In addition, we must not overlook the fact that some viewers might have simply found educational films boring; these images may have just as easily inspired the viewer to daydream about something else.

Figure 15.3 Frame enlargement from Pathé's *Brise-glace en Finlande*, released in France in November 1909, and released in the United States on July 25, 1910 as *Breaking Ice in Finland*. Image courtesy of George Eastman House.

Le Champignon, sa culture, sa croissance was released by Pathé in France in June 1911 and classified as a "scène de vulgarisation scientifique." It was released in the United States as *Mushroom Culture* on December 28, 1911, where it was classified as an "educational" subject.[65] Pathé's description of the film contains basic information: "The fungus that occurs most often takes the form of a small whitish umbrella."[66] The film itself illustrates the catalogue description, presenting giant close-ups of mushrooms; these images take on an abstract quality due to their large scale (see Figure 15.4). While this film emphasizes traditional methods of cultivation such as digging in manure, it also makes a show of modern methods of documentation: the last portion of the film contains time-lapse

photography in which three weeks of growth are shown in twenty seconds of cinematography.

The Pathéscope prints of these films were found on the same reel at GEH, but the films were initially released separately to the commercial market, two years apart. This indicates some of the ways that non-fiction film titles were presented differently in different exhibition contexts. When shown as part of a variety film program in a nickelodeon theater, either of these films might have functioned as a break from the narrative films in the program. When shown back-to-back as part of an exclusively educational screening, these two films' discordant subject matter might have struck the viewer as chaotic or random rather than organized and genteel. Moreover, both films emphasize the visual spectacle of their subject matter – the majesty of the ice, the grandiosity of the ships, the abstraction of the magnified mushrooms, the wonder of time-lapse photography – and this kind of spectacle would seem to encourage a spectator captivated by wondrous display rather than a spectator disciplined by the demands of sober educational attention.

Figure 15.4 Frame enlargement from Pathé's *Le Champignon, sa culture, sa croissance*, released in France in June 1911, and released in the United States as *Mushroom Culture* on December 28, 1911. Image courtesy of George Eastman House.

As these two films demonstrate, early educational subjects covered a diverse range of topics. In presenting "real," non-fiction images of the world (rather than fictional representations), they attempted to cultivate a spectator who was knowledgeable about and engaged with the modern world. Both of these films craft a striking visual sensibility, emphasizing the modernity of their subjects and the modernity of cinema itself. But both films are also open to different interpretations by different spectators. Educational films were useful for the film industry's campaign to legitimate itself, even if they ultimately found a niche in schools rather than theaters. More importantly, in their generalized mode of address to an audience comprised of different nationalities, economic classes, ages, and education levels, they perhaps unwittingly began to carve out a new "universal" spectator position, that of the mass audience. A 1911 editorial in *Motography* succinctly captures the way the film industry echoed the reformist rhetoric of educational uplift: "[t]he moral is that from the poor factory worker to the cultured intellectualist, the educational picture and the travelogue are the favorite subjects. When will the exhibitors of the world realize that vital truth?"[67]

Notes

1 Gilbert Seldes, *The Seven Lively Arts* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1924); Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film: A Critical History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939); Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976).

2 Mary Heaton Vorse, "Some Picture Show Audiences," *The Outlook*, June 24, 1911, 442.

3 Judith Thissen, "Jewish Immigrant Audiences in New York City, 1905–14," in *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era*, eds. Melvin Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 16.

4 I am referring, of course, to the FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives) conference on early cinema in Brighton, England in 1978, which "revolutionized" early cinema studies.

5 For a useful summary of these debates see Melvyn Stokes, "Introduction: Reconstructing American Cinema's Audiences," in Stokes and Maltby, *American Movie Audiences*, 2–5.

6 See Daan Hertogs and Nico de Klerk, eds., *Uncharted Territory: Essays on Early Nonfiction Film* (Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1997).

7 See, for example, Oliver Gaycken, "'A Drama Unites Them in a Fight to the Death': Some Remarks on the Flourishing of a Cinema of Scientific Vernacularization in France, 1909–1914," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 22, no. 3 (2002): 353–74; Jennifer Horne, "Nostalgia and Non-Fiction in Edison's 1917 Conquest Program," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 22, no. 33 (2002): 315–31; and Bill Marsh, "Visual Education in the United States and the 'Fly Pest' Campaign of 1910," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 30, no. 1 (2010): 21–36. References to other recent work on early nonfiction will be made below.

8 Noël Burch, "Porter, or Ambivalence," *Screen* 19, no. 4 (1978–9): 93–4; *Life to Those Shadows*, trans. and ed. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 51. Emphasis in original.

9 Charles Musser, in collaboration with Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 55.

10 Susan J. Douglas, "Notes Toward a History of Media Audiences," *Radical History Review*, no. 54 (Fall 1992): 131.

11 Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 35.

12 Judith Thissen, "Jewish Immigrant Audiences in New York City," in Stokes and Maltby, *American Movie Audiences*, 15–28; Giorgio Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema: Race, Landscape, and the Picturesque* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Giorgio Bertellini, "Italian Imageries, Historical Feature Films, and the Fabrication of Italy's Spectators in Early 1900s New York," in Stokes and Maltby, *American Movie Audiences*, 29–45; Alison Griffiths and James Latham, "Film and Ethnic Identity in Harlem, 1896–1915," in Stokes and Maltby, *American Movie Audiences*, 46–63.

13 Mary Carbine, "'The Finest Outside the Loop': Motion Picture Exhibition in Chicago's Black Metropolis, 1905–1928," *Camera Obscura* 23 (1990): 9–41; J. L. Lindstrom, "Where Development Has Just Begun: Nickelodeon Location, Moving Picture Audiences, and Neighborhood Development in Chicago," in *American Cinema's Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices*, eds. Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 217–38.

14 Gregory A. Waller, *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896–1930* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

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16 William Uricchio and Roberta E. Pearson, *Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 5.

17 Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 8.

18 Grieveson, *Policing Cinema*, 80.

19 For a more extended account of the campaign to promote early educational films see Jennifer Peterson, *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

20 For more on the early history of classroom films, see Jennifer Peterson, "Glimpses of Animal Life: Nature Films and the Emergence of Classroom Cinema," in *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the US*, eds. Dan Streible, Devin Orgeron, and Marsha Orgeron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

21 Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 30.

22 Lee Grieveson, "Not Harmless Entertainment: State Censorship and Cinema in the Transitional Era," in Keil and Stamp, *American Cinema*, 268.

23 Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 77.

24 *Moving Picture World* 11, no. 4 (January 27, 1912): 285.

25 *Moving Picture World* 11, no. 12 (March 23, 1912): 1045.

26 *Moving Picture World* 11, no. 4 (January 27, 1912): 285. The mainstream press article being referred to here is Walter Pritchard Eaton, "Education by Motion Pictures," *Munsey's Magazine* 46, no. 4 (1912): 519–29.

27 *Motography* reprinted the editorial in full; see "Hearst's Tribute to Pictures," *Motography* 6, no. 6 (December 1911): 257–8. The unsigned editorial was published in the *American*, the New York *Journal*, and the San Francisco and Los Angeles *Examiner*. See "Show Children the Real World: The Moving Picture – the Great Educator of the Future," New York *Evening Journal*, November 10, 1911, editorial page.

28 "Educational Motion Pictures Imported by George Kleine, 1909–1913," box 26, George Kleine Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. See also "Co-Operation in Visual Instruction," box 18, Kleine Papers. For a more thorough consideration of Kleine's role in promoting early non-fiction film, see my forthcoming book, *Education in the School of Dreams*, chap. 4, "'The Five-Cent University': Early Educational Films and the Drive to 'Uplift' the Cinema."

29 George Kleine to Charles Urban, July 10, 1909, box 26, Kleine Papers.

30 *The Nickelodeon*, February 18, 1911, 206; *Motography* 5, no. 6 (June 1911): 160.

31 For more on genre in early cinema see Tom Gunning, "'Those Drawn with a Very Fine Camel's Hair Brush': The Origins of Film Genres," *Iris* 19 (1995): 49–61.

32 See Charlie Keil, "Steel Engines and Cardboard Rockets: The Status of Fiction and Nonfiction in Early Cinema," in *F is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing*, eds. Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 29–39.

33 Tom Gunning similarly argues that early non-fiction is very different from what we now call documentary, which didn't emerge until the 1920s. See Gunning, "Before Documentary: Early Nonfiction Films and the 'View' Aesthetic," in Hertogs and de Klerk, *Uncharted Territory*, 9–24.

34 "Current Educational Releases," *Motography* 10, no. 13 (December 25, 1913): 488. See also "Motography's Ready-Reference Film Record,"

Motography 11, no. 9 (May 2, 1914): 23.

35 See “Brief Stories of the Week’s Film Releases,” *Motography* 12, no. 18 (October 31, 1914): 605; and “Motography’s Ready-Reference Film Record,” *Motography* 11, no. 9 (May 2, 1914): 35, where the *Hearst-Selig News Pictorial* is listed alongside other topical films such as *Italian Games and Dances* (Selig, 1914).

36 “Concerning Educational ‘Stuff’,” *Motography* 6, no. 2 (August 1911): 64.

37 *Moving Picture World* 9, no. 9 (September 9, 1911): 688.

38 W. H. J., “The Late Mr. J. P. Chalmers and the Educational Picture,” *Moving Picture World* 12, no. 6 (May 11, 1912): 512.

39 *Motography* 9, no. 7 (April 5, 1913): 15.

40 Frank Parker Hulette, “An Interview with Thomas A. Edison,” *Moving Picture World* 9, no. 2 (July 22, 1911): 105.

41 See the series of articles on Edison’s demonstration in *The Survey*, September 6, 1913.

42 “An Educational Program,” *Motography* 12, no. 2 (July 11, 1914): 51–2.

43 See Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel, 1911–1967* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 69–76.

44 Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 146.

45 George Kleine to Charles Urban, July 10, 1909, box 26, Kleine Papers.

46 Ibid.

47 Grieveson, *Policing Cinema*, 98.

48 See Grieveson, *Policing Cinema*, especially chap. 3.

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50 R. G. Dolesé, “The Moving Picture as an Educator,” *Moving Picture World* 9, no. 9 (September 9, 1911): 707.

51 R. C. Rose, “Education by Motion Pictures: An Interview with Ruth Gould Dolesé,” *Twentieth Century Magazine* (February 1912): 43.

52 General Film Company, *Catalogue of Educational Motion Pictures* (New York: General Film Company, n.d.); W. Stephen Bush, “The First Moving Picture Library,” *Moving Picture World* 14, no. 7 (November 23, 1912): 751.

53 Bush, “The First,” 751.

54 Krows, “Motion Pictures,” 154.

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59 Ibid.

60 See Stuart Hall’s seminal essay “Encoding/Decoding,” in *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, eds. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 166–76.

61 Anke Mebold and Charles Tepperman, “Resurrecting the Lost History of 28 mm Film in North America,” *Film History* 15, no. 2 (2003): 142.

62 Henri Bousquet, *Catalogue Pathé des années 1896 à 1914*, vol. *1907–1908–1909* (Bures-sur-Yvette: Édition Henri Bousquet, 1993), 230.

63 “Record of Current Films,” July 15, 1910, 56. Note that there is a mistake in the printing of this film’s title, which is listed as *Breaking Ice in England*. Such typographic mistakes were fairly common in the early trade press.

64 “Synopses of Current Films,” *The Nickelodeon*, July 15, 1910, 46.

65 Henri Bousquet, *Catalogue Pathé des années 1896 à 1914*, vol. *1910–1911* (Bures-sur-Yvette: Édition Henri Bousquet, 1994), 417; *Moving Picture World* 11, no. 4 (January 27, 1912): 286.

66 Bousquet, *Catalogue Pathé*, vol. *1910–1911*, 417; translation mine.

67 *Motography* 5, no. 5 (May 1911), 63.

16

Motion Picture Color and Pathé-Frères

The Aesthetic Consequences of Industrialization

Charles O’Brien

This chapter outlines the aesthetic effects of the industrialization of cinema prior to World War I through a focus on the stencil color system of Pathé-Frères.[1] “Pathécolor,” as it became known in 1911, was the first polychrome system for motion pictures to be successfully standardized for mass production. More than any such system prior to Technicolor, Pathé’s stencil color, the foremost brand on the market in the decade before World War I, defined motion picture color of the highest artistry. Moreover, the mechanization of color set the pattern for industrialization in other domains in the Pathé firm, including film stock manufacture and the developing of negatives and printing of positives.[2] Color industrialization at Pathé, the world’s main film producing company, thus evolved in close proximity with cinema’s industrialization overall.

The mechanization of stencil color not only increased the number and average length of high-quality color films produced; it also entailed a major aesthetic shift. Unlike the fantastic special-effects genres of the “scènes à trucs” (trick films) and “scènes de féeries” (fairy tales), which had dominated Pathé’s color film output before 1909, the new multi-reel “film d’art” dramas as well as the emergent non-fiction genres of the “scènes de

plein air" (outdoor films) and the "scènes de vulgarisation scientifique" (science education films) emphasized naturalistic representation. This chapter investigates the realist shift in motion picture color through an analysis of how color mechanization interacted with other causal factors to shape the realism of the new stencil films from Pathé. The chapter is divided into three sections. First, I inquire into what Pathé company records reveal of evolution during the 1903–14 period away from the craft-based approach associated with Méliès and toward a mechanized system in line with advanced industrial technique. Second, I document the shift in color aesthetics through an analysis of Pathé's output of color films over 1906–14, pinpointing the summer of 1909 as the moment when the realist shift became evident in these films. Third, I examine Pathé's rivalry with Kinemacolor, a company whose photographic system was demonstrated in Paris in June 1908 just as stenciling at Pathé was about to undergo maximum mechanization. My concluding remarks briefly relate Pathécolor to additional manifestations of realist cinema circa 1910, as well as that trend's connection with the rise of the feature film and other developments in cinema at the time.

Motion Picture Color before World War I

The dominance of photographic color in cinema over at least the past forty years has made it easy to forget how marginal such color has been throughout much of film history. From the mid-1890s up through the 1920s, cinema color was almost exclusively applied rather than photographic.[3] In a manner familiar to established methods for coloring still photographs,[4] the process began with the monochromatic skeleton of the orthochromatic positive print and then, one way or another, color was layered onto it.[5] Applied color technique for motion pictures reached its apogee in the first decade of the twentieth century with stencil operations at the Pathé company. Pathé's emergence as the world's largest film producer and exporter coincided with the creation of "Pathé-Frères," with its red rooster

logo, as the main brand name in the motion picture field. “There is no country where pictures are shown that the sign of the rooster is not the most familiar trademark flashed on the curtain,” reported the *New York Dramatic Mirror* in 1909.[6] Essential to this brand identity was Pathé’s investment in color technique, beginning with the red logo and intertitles that became standard for Pathé films circa 1903 and continuing up through the mechanized color of the next few years.

What made Pathé’s approach to color unique was its industrial character. Other companies had experimented with stencil color, notably Méliès and Gaumont, but they did so on a small, cottage-industry scale compared to Pathé, whose mechanized system, based in the vast color workroom at the Pathé plant at Vincennes, was used when at least 200 color copies of a film were to be made.[7] The high production volume was needed to recover the massive sunk costs for the new electric technologies, increased plant size, and expanded labor force – all unique to color work as undertaken at Pathé. The aesthetic consequences became evident in 1909 when Pathé began employing electric stencil cutters and coloring machines and reducing its production of color “scènes à trucs” in favor of stencil versions of its non-fiction films and multi-reel dramas. The bulk of the stencil work was undertaken at the Pathé plant at Vincennes, whose construction in 1903–5 began with the company’s first experiments in mechanized color.[8] In 1904, a large color workshop was built on the Vincennes property.[9] These color initiatives came while Pathé-Frères was increasing its production volume to the point in 1905 of becoming the world’s largest film producer. The production increase, as Pathé conceived it, required that work be accelerated and the volume of color films increased, which in turn necessitated unprecedented expansion and rearrangement of the plant and workforce.[10] Crucial, too, was the standardization of technique, which, among other advantages, allowed films printed at the new plant at Joinville to be colored at Vincennes.[11]

The ambition of the stencil-color effort was reflected in the rapid increase in color operations at Vincennes. In April 1906, when some eighty workers were employed there for color-related work, Pathé set out to increase the

number to 200 by the end of the year.[12] In 1907, a hundred color machines designed by Florimonde, a Pathé employee, were installed at the Vincennes workshop, where Florimonde's wife supervised the workers.[13] Over the next two years the system was refined through the introduction of new components. Most notable were the electric cutting and color-application machines designed by Jean Méry and installed at Vincennes beginning in late 1908.[14] Méry's cutter enlarged each frame of the film strip on a ground-glass screen where a worker traced it using a stylus connected to a pantograph, a series of bars on pivots that reproduced an analogous shape on the 35 mm print. When the operator's stylus touched the glass, an electrical circuit activated two cutting tools driven by an electric sewing-machine-like apparatus. The cutters, one oscillating on each side of the 35 mm print, then punched out the image to create the stencil. The process entailed advancing the film strip one frame at a time and repeating the cutting action for each frame – unlike earlier systems such as Segundo de Chomón's, which used the same glass stencil for large numbers of frames, including the thousands of frames comprising a single shot.[15] Each color required a separate stencil and some shots used five or more colors.[16] In the Méry system, a set of stencils was expected to produce around a hundred prints before requiring replacement.[17] At the Vincennes plant, color copies for a single title were produced in batches of three to four hundred.[18]

Pathé's Commitment to Stencil Color

Charles Pathé's personal involvement in color is evident in reports for the company's monthly board of directors meetings. The reports refer to Charles Pathé's investigations into new color patents, his negotiations with inventors, and calculations of the costs and benefits of various plans for increasing the company's color investment. Convinced that the market for color films was some four to five times larger than what the film industry

currently supplied, Charles Pathé set out to convince his company's shareholders that mechanizing stencil color would enable the company to dominate a vast and mainly untapped market for high-quality films.[19] In addition, color, though expensive, was a good research and development investment nonetheless since color prints of motion pictures could not be duped and pirated by competing companies, which had plagued Pathé-Frères in North America.[20]

Pathé's commitment to color mechanization was apparent as early as January 1903, when the company began conducting "mechanical coloring tests" and taking out patents for various coloring devices.[21] These investments suggest the economics discussed by Gerben Bakker in his recent book on the industrialization of entertainment in the early twentieth century,[22] whereby the successful motion picture firms in the 1900s acquired competitive advantage over stage entertainment as well as other film companies by standardizing their product in ways that enhanced both its artistic quality and its potential "tradeability." Pathé's stencil films were exemplary in this regard since they not only exhibited great artistry but were shown on ordinary projectors, which made them infinitely more distributable than films made with any photographic system in development at the time. In convincing investors that the anticipated profits from wide distribution would vastly exceed the increased production costs, Pathé was able to invest in mechanized color research and development in ways that boosted the company's volume of color films while also making possible a realist aesthetic, seen at the time as a quality increase.

Laurent Le Forestier, in his recent book on Pathé-Frères's rapid expansion in the mid-1900s, assigns the mechanization of stencil color a pivotal role in the company's emergence as the world's preeminent motion picture firm.[23] Pathé's success in the important North American film market has been examined by Richard Abel, who details the role of Pathé's color films in attracting the American middle class into movie houses and hence spurring the growth of American movie exhibition.[24] High-quality color films from Pathé stimulated the American demand for motion pictures to the point that by the late 1900s the United States, with some 10,000 venues for motion

picture screenings, had become the largest national film market in the world.

Pathé's Color Production: Some Statistics

The impact of mechanical stencil technology on color cinema aesthetics can be measured by examining the lists of color films in the Pathé catalogues compiled by Henri Bousquet.[25] The catalogues draw upon various primary sources, including film scenarios deposited at the Bibliothèque Nationale; Pathé company bulletins, company registers and inventories; theatre programs; and trade press reports; as well as secondary sources such as lists of films compiled by other scholars. The catalogues indicate for each title whether it includes color images, and if so, how many meters of color film there were relative to toned and monochrome. The utility of the Bousquet catalogues as a resource for the study of film color has limits. The catalogues offer little guidance as to how color was employed in the films, and they identify only the films and their length, not how many prints of each title were struck, thus making it hard to assess the relative popularity of specific titles, series, and genres. Nonetheless, the catalogues cover the full range of the company's output rather than the relatively small number of surviving prints, and thus provide a rough way of tracking the increase in the number of color films produced as well as the rise and fall in popularity of specific color genres and hence changes in Pathé's stencil aesthetic.

In an important article on Pathécolor, Bregtje Lameris uses the Bousquet catalogues to show that prior to 1909 Pathé used stencil color mainly for films designated in its promotional literature as "scènes à trucs" and "scènes de féeries et contes," which were typically filmed indoors with an immobile camera and the principal action centered in the frame, thus making them easier to stencil.[26] Descendants of the trick and magic films produced a decade earlier by Méliès, these films display color as a special attraction. My examination of the Bousquet catalogues involved counting the black-and-white and color films and determining their length in meters, analyzing

the figures with basic statistics software to compute means, and then displaying the results in the charts reproduced below.

Figure 16.1 presents a simple graphic display of Pathé's output of color films relative to monochrome for each year from 1906 to 1914. The chart shows a definite trend for 1906–12, when Pathé's production of color films, for the most part, continually increased along with its overall production. Also notable is the similar contour for the two trendlines: a relatively smooth, arc-like curve marked by two slight peaks in 1909 and 1912. The matching contours perhaps suggest an attempt to maintain color production as a fixed percentage of monochrome production. But Figure 16.1 reports only the number of titles at a time when the film industry was adopting the multi-reel feature film as its standard format and the length of movies was increasing radically. It is therefore useful to supplement Figure 16.1 with the contemporaneous trend in film length, provided in Figure 16.2.

Figure 16.1 Pathé's annual output of color films along with the total output, based on the Bousquet catalogues.

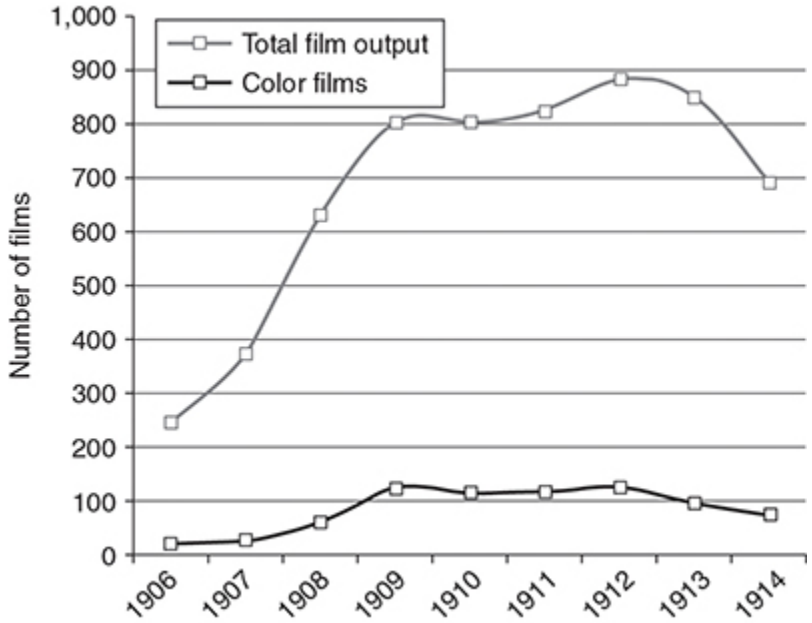


Figure 16.2 Total annual footage (in meters) for Pathé's color and non-color films, based on the Bousquet catalogues.

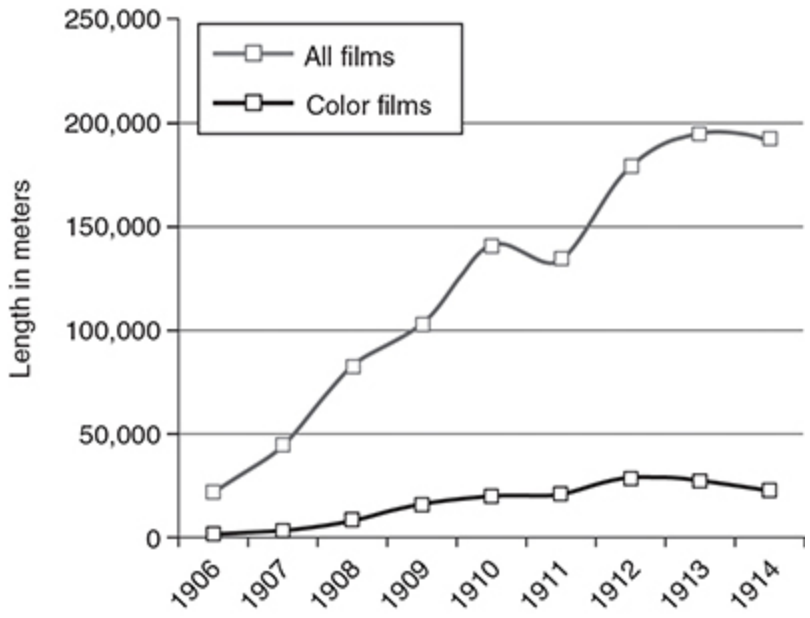
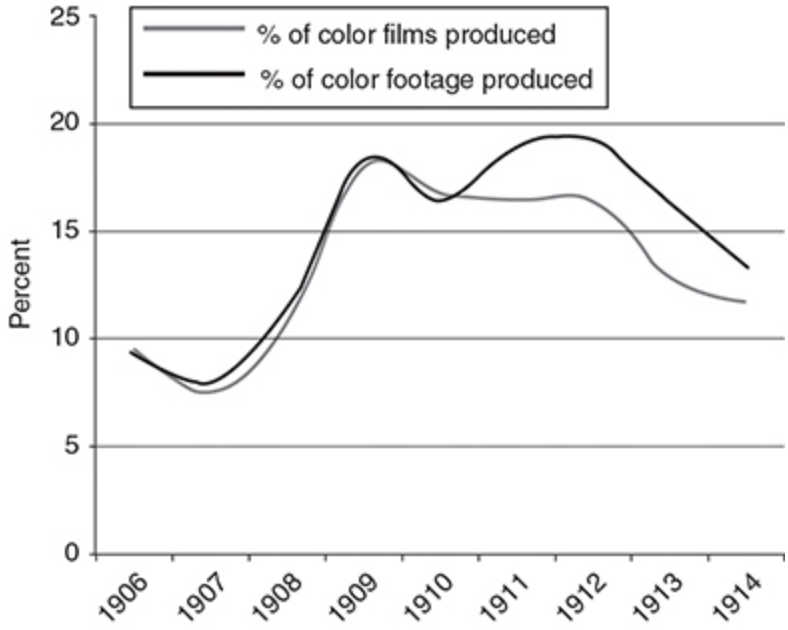


Figure 16.2, with its steady annual increase from 1906 to 1913 in the aggregate length for both color and monochrome output, shows that just as the number of films increasing in a fixed ratio with the overall length produced. Here 1909 and 1912 do not stand out as exceptional as they had in Figure 16.1 but instead merge into what amounts to a single upward trend for most of the eight years. The dip in 1914 appears to have been a consequence of a major external factor, the outbreak of World War I in August, when filmmaking at Pathé and other French companies began to slow down drastically. A further perspective can be gleaned from Figure 16.3, which juxtaposes two patterns of development, one pertaining to color films as a percentage of the company's total film output and the other to color films as a percentage of the total aggregate footage.

Figure 16.3 presents two remarkable findings – one for the first half of the 1906–14 period and the other for the second. First is the perfect match of the two trendlines for the years 1906–10. Over these years, Figure 16.3 indicates, Pathé was increasing its production of color films at the same rate it was increasing the aggregate length of footage produced. The match in percentage over five consecutive years adds to the impression that the company was pursuing a deliberate strategy informed by knowledge of how much color film was being produced at any single time. The second finding concerns the latter half of the eight-year period, when beginning in 1911 the two trendlines diverge as the percentage increase for overall length began to

exceed the percentage increase for the number of films – a pattern that lasted until the outbreak of war in 1914. The percentage increase in 1911 in color footage relative to the number of color films suggests Pathé's new role in producing and distributing color editions of feature-length films.

Figure 16.3 Color films as a percentage of Pathé's total output and of its total aggregate footage, reported yearly.



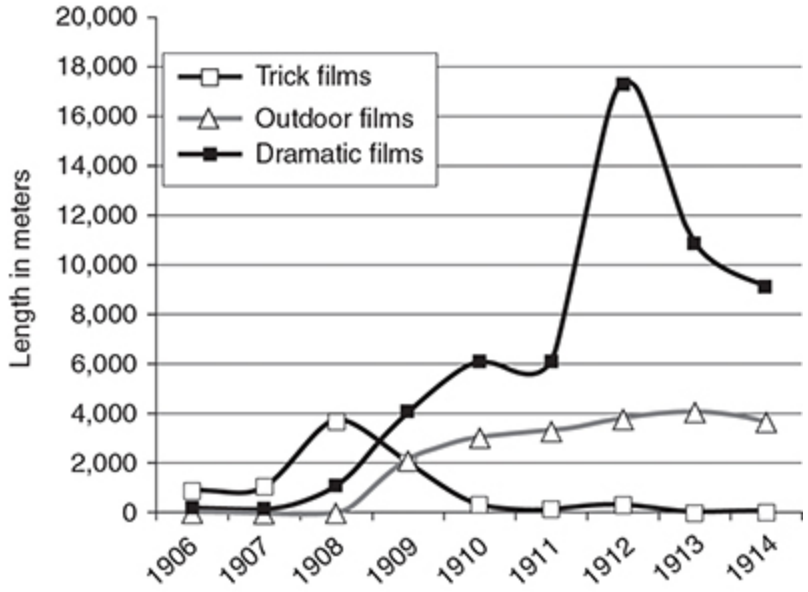
The Realist Aesthetic

With respect to aesthetics, the key finding is provided in Figure 16.4, which displays the aggregate lengths of Pathé's main color genres: the trick films, the outdoor films, and the "scènes dramatiques" (dramatic films).

The three genres included in Figure 16.4 account for only a fraction of the dozens listed in the Bousquet catalogues but they are the most common numerically. The ups and downs in the status of these key genres, both in the number of films and their total length, reveal, in rough outline, how the realist trend in cinema manifested itself in Pathé's massive output of footage over 1906–14. Notable here is the inverse relation between the color trick films and the color outdoor films: in 1909, the latter seems to replace the former as Pathé's main color genre. Trick films, whether color or monochrome, had dominated Pathé's output as early as 1901, when they

made up around one-third of the company's total production for that year.[27] In 1906, trick films already defined Pathé's output of color films, and in 1908, the total length for color trick films nearly quadrupled from the preceding year. In 1909, however, a reversal in policy set in[28] and trick films began to become less numerous, year after year, until bottoming out in 1913 and 1914 when no color editions of the genre were released. The same trend holds for the fairy tales (not pictured in Figure 16.4), color versions of which peaked in 1908 and then decreased steadily afterwards. Color mechanization appears to have been a factor since non-fiction genres rarely colored before 1909 became the dominant color genres afterward in the number of titles produced. Color versions of the location-filmed outdoor films, for instance, became common only in mid-1909, with the first wave of mechanically stenciled films. The Bousquet volume, for instance, lists only one color outdoor film for the first half of 1909; for the latter half, however, it lists twenty-two such films. The increase continued year-by-year until 1913, when forty-three color outdoor films were released. With respect to Pathé's investment in color, the outdoor films that became common after 1909, Figure 16.4 suggests, functioned as replacements of sorts for the trick films prevalent until then.[29]

Figure 16.4 The aggregate length for Pathé's main color genres, by year.



A further development indicated in Figure 16.4 concerns the aggregate length for the “scènes dramatiques” (dramatic films), which spikes upward in 1912. The steep rise in length for the dramatic films suggests the impact of the major film-industrial development of the period: the emergence of the feature-length fiction film as the dominant format across the international film industry. What is to be made of the immediate and steep drop in Figure 16.4 of the overall length for dramatic films in 1913 and 1914? I don’t have an answer except to say that the decline is perhaps more apparent than real – an artifact of my research method perhaps – since the genre of the dramatic film appears to have been quite amorphous, encompassing a wide variety of types of films, to the point that when measuring the dramatic film it is difficult to know what is being measured. Moreover, beginning in 1908 with the founding of Film d’Art and other companies, many new dramatic series, each with their own genre label, began to show up in the Pathé catalogues. How does a “scène dramatique” differ from a “comédie dramatique,” a “scène biblique,” a “scène historique,” a “scène de la vie moderne,” or a “scène de la vie cruelle?” More dramatic films were being made in 1912 and the average length had increased significantly. If more research were undertaken, identifying and factoring in how the new genres and series overlap with the dramatic films, then the decline in the genre for 1913 recorded in Figure 16.4 might appear less extreme or perhaps even disappear altogether.

Early Stencil Color

To grasp the aesthetic change signaled in Figure 16.4, it helps to consider the nature of the technical developments at the time. Early stencil films suggest the hand-colored imagery that had preceded not only the commercialization of photographic color but photography itself. Colored glass lantern slides, which had been around for centuries, enjoyed new popularity in the late nineteenth century, when inexpensive synthetic dyes enabled the making and dissemination of gorgeous color in myriad forms on a colossal scale.[30] Cinema emerged as a major entertainment at a time when signage, buildings, clothing, and printed matter had become colorful in ways unthinkable before then. The vast majority of films circa 1900 may

have circulated in black-and-white copies[31] but polychrome entered the screening space anyway via the hand-painted lantern slides used during reel changes.[32] Lantern slides were a crucial reference for motion picture color. In fact, the same craftspeople and workers who colored motion pictures often colored lantern slides, too. The workshop in Paris run by Elisabeth Thuillier, for instance, where at the turn of the century some 200 laborers had colored Méliès films, had begun as a service for lantern slides.[33]

Any motion picture color process relying on hand painting with brushes was slow and laborious to the utmost. Even a very short film lasting 50 seconds included 700 frames, and the frames were tiny, less than a third the width of an ordinary lantern slide. Coloring them, one by one, with magnifying glasses and fine-point brushes was a painstaking job, to say the least. The great effort notwithstanding, the artistic results varied in quality. When projected onto a movie screen, the 35 mm image was magnified hundreds of times, making brushstrokes, mismatches of color and shape, and other flaws in application obvious.[34] In one frame color might overlap one edge of an object and in the next frame overlap the other edge, so that brush strokes seem to dance on the image's surface, flicking and roiling.[35] In early polychrome films, color – whether applied by hand or stencil – looked like a separate layer on top of the photographic image.

This layered effect worked beautifully in the fantasy films of the time. An example of a Pathé film intended to display stencil color's fantastic potential is *Le scarabée d'or* (*The Golden Beetle*, 1907). This trick film was directed by Segundo de Chomón, the color-attuned director from Spain who had moved to Paris in 1905 to supervise the making of Pathé's trick films and to experiment with stencil color.[36] *Le scarabée d'or* exhibits the state of the art for stencil color prior to 1909. It was shot in the studio with a fixed camera; the action is centered in the frame, thus allowing the same stencil to serve for the whole shot – a stencil probably made of glass rather than celluloid; and the hues are highly saturated and juxtaposed in ways intended for maximum sensory impact. A fine example can be found in *Le scarabée d'or*'s culminating spinning-wheel explosion, whose alternating bands of red and violet juxtapose hues from opposite ends of the visible frequency range. A similar sensitivity to color perception defines other

films directed by Chomón, such as *L'album magique* (*The Magic Album*, 1908), with its elaborate polychrome interiors.

The New Stencil Films

By 1909 the previous emphasis at Pathé-Frères on color as a spectacular attraction had evolved into a new stress on the photographic depiction of phenomenal reality.[37] The situation at Pathé thus conforms to the account of film color history advanced by Joshua Yumibe, for whom the colorful attractions of the single-reel era began around 1910 "to give way to restrained uses that are amenable – synaesthetically, like styles of musical accompaniment – to unobtrusive narration."[38] With respect to Pathé-Frères, the change presupposed use of the Méry system, which in 1910 was in full swing with 400 workers employed at Vincennes entirely for coloring films.[39] In creating a stencil whose outline matched the shapes of objects depicted in the film more reliably than any preceding system, Méry's pantograph had the crucial aesthetic consequence of endowing stencil-color images with a more uniform finish. Adding to the uniformity was the other main component of the Méry system: the automatic color-application device, whose felt applicator (or spray gun in some cases) further reduced the hand-colored look of earlier stencil films.[40]

The first Pathé films made with Méry's electric cutter were released in June 1909 in Paris and soon afterwards in London and New York, where they drew much interest in the film community.[41] The British film journalist Thomas Bedding in September reported on excitement in New York over "the new Pathé color films," whose "colors are not slobbed on, but are imparted to the pictures with reticence and restraint. The result is a beautiful naturalness of effect that converts the Pathé film into an unobtrusive work of art which does not 'hit you right between the eyes'."[42] In their smooth, machine-made look, the new stencil films appeared "so nearly identical with the best of natural color photography that the average viewer cannot distinguish the difference."[43] A review published in August 1909 in *Bioscope* cited the recent Pathé films *Chasse à la panthère* (*A*

Panther Hunt, 1909), *Les bords du Gange* (*The Banks of the Ganges*, 1909), and *Dans l'Hellade* (*In Ancient Greece*, 1909) as indicating that "Messrs. Pathé seem to have reached the highest consummation of this art [of color motion pictures] by their new method [mechanized stenciling]."[44] The critic goes on to note that some showmen are reluctant to screen these films "on the ground that audiences after they have seen some of the effects produced by Pathé's new method, will be dissatisfied with black-and-white pictures." The new color films were often described as realistic, as in the review of *Les bords du Gange* published in *The New York Dramatic Mirror*: "The fine coloring of this film brings out the interesting nature scenes … with startling realism."[45]

The improved realism has been noted also by recent observers such as Paolo Cherchi Usai, who singles out "a refinement of color and precision of outline unequalled in the period in the Pathé series 'Film d'Art' and the adaptations from drama and literature produced by the company's 'Film d'Arte Italiana' between 1909 and 1912."[46] Film d'Art and Filme d'Arte Italiana had contracted with Pathé to distribute their films, a role that included coloring the release prints. The aesthetic characteristics associated with these prints – the precise matching of color and shape and the restrained, muted hues – won acclaim for their artistry and were alluded to in Pathé's promotion of the "realism" of its stenciled films.[47]

Kinemacolor

The realist drift in movie aesthetics, however, was by no means limited to Pathé but pervaded cinema circa 1910. Notable here was the emergence of an important photographic alternative to stencil color, Kinemacolor, the only photographic system prior to World War I to achieve public exhibition.[48] Patented in 1906 and then demonstrated in 1908 to select audiences in London and Paris, Kinemacolor immediately drew great interest from journalists. By 1910 exhibitors were contracting to open Kinemacolor theaters in major European cities and for the next several years Kinemacolor became the most successful photographic system for

motion pictures before the introduction of Technicolor's Process Two in 1922.

Kinemacolor was a two-color system that used a single film strip with alternating frames in red and green and a camera and projector equipped with a rotary filter divided into red and green halves. The two-color filter of the Kinemacolor projector rotated at a rate matching the camera, at 32 frames per second – twice as fast as ordinary. In principle, the rapid speed led the viewer to perceive the alternation of the two colors as a composite image. Though lacking a prototypical shade of blue and pure white, Kinemacolor nonetheless captured the hues of events before the camera with beauty and clarity. With no layers of dye to obscure the photographic reproduction, Kinemacolor, the advertisements boasted, offered an extraordinary capacity for rendering "texture": "Velvet, silk, satin and cloth, quite apart from their color, stand out perfectly distinct from one another; the petal of a tulip is clearly distinguished from that of a rose or a poppy."[49] Adding to the realist thrust of Kinemacolor was the company's practice of producing mainly films of sunlit public ceremonies and other "actualities," which comprised some 70 percent of its total output.[50] That the same ceremonies were typically also filmed in monochrome by other companies invited audiences to compare Kinemacolor films to the ordinary motion picture.

With Pathé's stencil system the only competition in the field of polychrome motion pictures, Kinemacolor's promoters were concerned to define their system as an improvement over it.[51] A Kinemacolor advertisement of 1911, for instance, contrasts Kinemacolor to applied color with Pathé as the implicit reference: "Kinemacolor is the *only process in existence* reproducing actual scenes in living, vivid colors. The real tints and hues of an object are secured at the moment of photographing: in all other processes colors are applied afterward by hand or machinery – a crude and laborious method, possible only with the simplest subjects."[52]

The rivalry with Pathé was inaugurated at one of the first Kinemacolor demonstrations, in Paris on Saturday, July 8, 1908 at the Salles des Ingénieurs Civils, where George Albert Smith, the Kinemacolor inventor and promoter, showed a film of the Grand Prix Motor Race at Dieppe shot

on Friday, the day prior to the demonstration.[53] Like other public events filmed by the Kinemacolor company, the Grand Prix had also been filmed in monochrome by other producers, including Pathé. Since a stencil-color version of the automobile race would have taken several weeks to finish, Smith's demonstration film, already projected to an audience the very next day, established Kinemacolor as an improvement over what Pathé could offer to a motion picture industry increasingly sensitive to the aesthetic appeal of photographic realism.

The demonstration of Kinemacolor in Paris provoked an anxious response from the major film companies in France, where photographic color had been pioneered by Auguste and Louis Lumière. In the early twentieth century, inventors in France and elsewhere struggled to extend current color advances in still photography into motion pictures. The Kinemacolor demonstration had raised the stakes, pushing Léon Gaumont, Maurice Gianati claims, to step up his efforts to commercialize Chronochrome, a three-color photographic system for motion pictures ultimately demonstrated in 1913.[54] Charles Pathé, for his part, defended his steadfast commitment to stencil color to his company's shareholders. In 1908, shortly after the Kinemacolor demonstration in Paris, Pathé, with approval from the company's board of directors, sent the company's shareholders a letter assuring them that Kinemacolor could not live up to its commercial promise.[55]

In response, G. A. Smith, Kinemacolor's inventor, brought a lawsuit against Pathé for defamation – unsuccessfully, it turned out.[56] Smith also published an open letter in the *Phono-ciné-gazette* in which he challenged Pathé to prove its case by engaging in a filmmaking competition to be judged by the French public.[57] The challenge required Pathé and Smith to film the same event and then see who produced a color print the fastest. Smith, with false charity, offered Pathé a 24 hour head start, expecting that Pathé needed at least two weeks to stencil its film whereas Smith would produce his own film within a day.[58] The contest, it seems, did not take place. The publicity battle, however, continued for several years. In May 1910, on the Friday of King Edward VII's funeral, Kinemacolor representatives, "thanks to an admirable organization, were able to show the

pictures of the King's funeral to audiences soon after ten o'clock on Friday evening. They made special arrangements with the English and French railways to develop and print the film during the journey."[59] When in 1911 a theater opened in Paris for the exclusive screening of Kinemacolor films, Pathé started advertising their stencil system as "Pathécolor," prompting legal action for copyright infringement from Smith.[60] In stressing in advertisements that Kinemacolor offered "color and reality," the Kinemacolor company implied that its main rival offered something less – color alone, without the realism.[61] The rhetoric became confusing at times. An advertisement for Pathécolor published in *Ciné-Journal* in December 1911 asserted that Pathécolor, "the latest advance in modern science," is not "a black-and-white process colored with screens" – a statement that seems to deny that Pathécolor was, in fact, a stencil process.

What made Kinemacolor worrisome for Pathé? Motion picture trade publications such as the *Nickelodeon* editorialized correctly that Kinemacolor posed little commercial threat to Pathé and the film-color status quo since Kinemacolor required exhibitors to make a huge capital investment in special projectors that did not play ordinary motion pictures.[62] In effect, the very high research and development costs behind Kinemacolor were being passed on to the exhibitors, which meant that even at its peak of popularity, around 1911, Kinemacolor was used for only a tiny handful of films shown in a few select houses in major cities. Like other photographic systems of the time, including Gaumont's Chronochrome, Kinemacolor was irrelevant to the vast majority of moviegoers, whose experience of motion picture color came from the applied techniques of hand-painting, tinting, toning, and stenciling. Unfortunately for historians, however, the business-as-usual methods of applied color drew much less coverage from journalists than did the novel photographic experiments.

Kinemacolor – the mainly positive press coverage notwithstanding – had major technical drawbacks.[63] To shoot a film in photographic color required a high-speed camera and projector, double the amount of footage (to feed the 32 frames-per-second system), special red-sensitive film stock, and an abundance of the brightest sunlight. Also, like other motion picture systems based on additive principles, Kinemacolor was plagued by

problems of registration, of getting the red and green images to line up on screen.[64] Aligning the separate beams of light was effectively impossible when there was lateral movement across the frame. When a figure moved sideways, two distinct layers of color became visible, creating the registration flaw called “fringing.”

The limitations of Kinemacolor with regard to lateral movement perhaps informed Pathé’s decision in 1909 to ramp up production of color editions of the outdoor films. These proto-documentary films posed a technical challenge for stencil treatment because they often featured processions and parades whose lateral travel required making a separate stencil for each frame. Earlier in the decade Pathé had avoided lateral figure movement in films intended for stenciling.[65] In the 1910s, however, shots involving lateral passage and/or panning of the camera were increasingly colored with stencils. Examples abound in the remarkable *Maudite soit la guerre* (*War be Damned,* Alfred Machin, 1914), with its rapid panning stencil shots of airplanes careening down the air strip. The prominence of moments of lateral travel in Pathé’s stencil films in the early 1910s served to signal the superiority of Pathécolor over Kinemacolor.

This chapter has emphasized aesthetic changes stemming from the mechanization of stencil color at Pathé. Was the new realism of stencil color a consequence of new artistic possibilities opened up by the mechanized stenciling? Complicating any straightforward answer are the multiplicity of potential causal factors that had converged around 1910: the audience had become larger and more middle class, the multi-reel feature film was displacing the one-reel short as the industry standard, and motion picture technique was advancing rapidly, as was evident in the emerging transnational *film d’art* movement linked to the feature film.[66] That the realism quickly followed the technology upgrade makes it look like a consequence of color mechanization. But the technical achievement of mechanization cannot wholly explain the Pathé company’s embrace of a realist aesthetic since realist initiatives in the motion picture industry were by no means limited to Pathé-Frères. Indeed, such initiatives had become common enough in the late 1900s that Pathé’s mechanized stencil films can

be seen as merely one manifestation of a general drift in film aesthetics at the time.

Evaluating the aesthetic consequences of color mechanization at Pathé compels the historian to account for the interaction of multiple and simultaneous causes and conditions. Among the latter were rival approaches to film realism that had emerged circa 1910. Besides Kinemacolor, one can cite the improved black-and-white cinematography associated with Griffith at Biograph, whose photographic realism was promoted in the American film trade press in 1910 as an alternative to Pathécolor.[67] The rivalry between Pathé and Biograph is sufficiently complex to require a chapter on it alone. In the meantime, a study of Pathécolor, the analysis in this chapter suggests, can easily extend to virtually the whole field of motion picture aesthetics in the late 1900s/early 1910s, when the success of Pathé's stencil color on the world film market made it an inevitable reference for competing companies presenting their own films as an alternative to the extraordinary stencil films from Pathé. As new, realist styles were marketed – linked to photographic color systems such as Kinemacolor, the monochrome cinematography refined by Griffith and Bitzer at Biograph, and other manifestations – the Pathé company, with its color operations already mechanized, was able very quickly to adjust its color practices and advertising accordingly. Whatever Pathé-Frères's differences from its rivals, it appears in retrospect to have participated in a transnational, industry-wide project circa 1910, when motion pictures – in their up-market "artistic" manifestations especially – began exhibiting, in one form or another, what was widely characterized as a realism unique to cinema.

Notes

1 I wish to thank André Gaudreault and the anonymous readers of *A Companion to Early Cinema* for their insightful comments on this chapter; Oliver Gaycken for his generosity in supplying me with his photos of Kinemacolor brochures; and audiences at the 2010 conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies and the 2010 Domitor conference

on early cinema, where drafts of portions of this chapter were presented. Any errors or failings in the chapter are the author's responsibility alone.

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4 Richard Benson, *The Printed Picture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2000), 186.

5 "Kinemacolor Supplement," *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* (November 21, 1912): n.p.

6 "First in Pantomime Art," *New York Dramatic Mirror* 61, no. 1 (May 1, 1909): 38.

7 "Color Cinematography: Recent Advances," *The Times* 8, no. 37 (April 3, 1912): 23.

8 In the report for the board of directors meeting of March 26, 1903. The reports for this and other meetings cited in this chapter are available in two bound volumes at the Fondation Jerôme Seydoux in Paris under the title *Livres des Conseils d'administration, 1896–1914*.

9 In the report for the board of directors meeting of July 11, 1904.

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18 Read and Meyer, *Restoration*, 181.

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20 In the report for the board of directors meeting of July 11, 1904.

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22 Gerben Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialized: The Emergence of the Internationalized Film Industry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 185–228.

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29 Le Forestier, "Une disparition instructive," 62, 73.

30 Tom Gunning, "Colorful Metaphors: The Attraction of Color in Early Cinema," *Living Pictures* 2, no. 2 (2003): 6–9; Cherchi Usai, *Silent Cinema*, 21; Joshua Yumibe, "'Harmonious Sensations of Sound by Means of Colors': Vernacular Color Attractions in Silent Cinema," *Film History* 21, no. 2 (2009): 173.

31 Gunning, "Colorful Metaphors," 10–11.

32 “The Rehabilitation of the Lantern Slide,” *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 3 (January 22, 1910): 83.

33 Jacques Malthête, “Méliès et la couleur,” in *Méliès et la naissance du spectacle cinématographique*, ed. Madeleine Mathête-Méliès (Paris: Klincksieck, 1984): 191.

34 Rathbun, *Motion Picture*, 210.

35 S. Le Tourneur, “La couleur au cinématographe,” *Ciné-Journal* 3, no. 114 (October 29, 1910): 13; G. Fagot, “La cinématographie en couleurs,” *Ciné-Journal* 3, no. 97 (July 2, 1910): 17.

36 Minguet Batllori, “Segundo de Chomón,” 94–103.

37 Nicola Mazzanti, “Colours, Audiences, and (Dis)continuity in the ‘Cinema of the Second Period’,” *Film History* 21, no. 1 (2009): 74–5.

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Part IV

Early Cinema Presentations

17

The European Fairground Cinema

(Re)defining and (Re)contextualizing the "Cinema of Attractions"

Joseph Garncarz

The concept of the "cinema of attractions," which was introduced by Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault to the scholarship on early cinema in the 1980s, is one of the most well-known and oft-used concepts in film studies. This essay aims to make two contributions to the discussion of the concept. Firstly, in accordance with Charles Musser's critique, [1] I propose to limit the application of the concept to a specific type of film, rather than all films produced before 1907. Secondly, based on empirical research, I intend to show that the films that can be regarded as part of the "cinema of attractions" in this redefined sense were predominantly produced for the European fairground. The main thrust of the argument is not to explain why the "cinema of attractions" emerged, but why it became dominant for a while.

The dominance of the aesthetics of the "cinema of attractions" can best be explained when one identifies the intended consumers and thus the market for which these films were produced. For example, educational films shown in schools had a different aesthetics than films made primarily to entertain. In turn, entertainment films differed in relation to the venues for which they were primarily intended (e.g., films made for fairground shows did not construct a closed diegetic space, in contrast to those later made for permanent cinemas).

Before permanent cinemas became the dominant form of film exhibition, the three largest markets for films were fairgrounds, variety theaters, and town hall shows. Even though discussions of the "cinema of attractions" have been very elaborate, they seem to lack awareness of the market for which these films were primarily produced. [2] This contribution intends to show that fairgrounds, which were specific to Europe, were the primary market for these kinds of films, and not variety theaters or town halls.

The majority of films produced before 1910 were European productions, and the films actually shown were also mostly European, even in the USA. [3] An analysis of the European fairground reveals why the aesthetics of "attractions" is so typical of early cinema. The fairground was the only exhibition context for films that primarily sought to entertain (whereas films in variety theaters sometimes also served propagandistic purposes, films in churches were intended to inspire religious devotion, etc.), and "attractions" were its typical fare long before films appeared. Furthermore, as far as we know, the European fairground seems to have been the largest and definitely the best-organized market for the distribution of films. Hence the "cinema of attractions" is the dominant aesthetics of the era, but it is not identical with early cinema as a whole.

Older European film histories already recognized fairgrounds as the main cultural context of early cinema, in the sense that the fairground market provided the largest outlet for films and was the most influential in shaping their form, but they did not provide systematic and extensive data to support their claims. [4] A few years after Gunning's groundbreaking essay on the "cinema of attractions," [5] film scholars began to research European fairground cinema on a broad empirical basis. [6] However, these studies in turn did not systematically connect their findings to the concept of the "cinema of attractions." This contribution will argue that a (re)contextualization of the "cinema of attractions" in its main exhibition context will prove fruitful for both the concept and further empirical research on early cinema.

The Concept “Cinema of Attractions”

The concept “cinema of attractions” designates a film style that was dominant in early cinema until around 1907 (Gunning does not explicitly define the period boundary). According to Gunning, the “cinema of attractions” “presented visual delights (color, spectacular costumes or set design), surprises (unusual physical feats, or magical trick effects), displays of the exotic, beautiful, or grotesque (views of foreign sites or indigenous peoples, scantily clad women, or physical freaks), or other sorts of sensational thrills (speeding trains, explosions, tricks of fast motion).” [7] Gaudreault uses the term “monstration” (from *montrer*, to show) to define this film style, meaning it is characterized by a mode of “showing” rather than “telling.” [8] Gunning uses the term “attraction” with reference to Sergei Eisenstein’s theater aesthetics, which he called “montage of attractions.” [9] For Eisenstein an attraction is “any aggressive moment in the theater, i.e., any element of it that subjects the audience to emotional or psychological influence, verified by experience and mathematically calculated to produce specific emotional shocks in the spectator in their proper order within the whole. These shocks provide the only opportunity of perceiving the ideological aspect of what is being shown, the final ideological conclusion.” [10] Since the viewer is often directly addressed by early films (Georges Méliès, for example, often appears in his films and points to what he is showing the audience) and subjected to strong emotional effects (the outlaw Barnes firing his six shooter at the camera in *The Great Train Robbery* [1903]), Gunning describes their aesthetics with reference to Eisenstein as a series of visual shocks. Gunning compared the viewer to a “gawker” who pauses for a moment to stare at the moving images, which surprise and astound him.

Charles Musser has objected that the concept does not do justice to the heterogeneity of early cinema, because narrative films also existed before 1907. [11] Gunning, however, has argued that early narrative films nonetheless differ “greatly from the narrative films increasingly produced

after 1906, in which character's [*sic*] motives and narrative suspense not only is hinted at but determines the style of the film." [12] In early cinema, narrative is often just a "pretext for the display of a series of tricks or elaborate sets." [13] By contrast, "classical narrative cinema," which emerged in the 1910s, constructs a closed diegetic space that is sealed off by a "fourth wall," i.e., the actors play their roles without acknowledging the presence of the audience. Means of virtual communication with the audience, such as a glance into the camera, become taboo. Furthermore, the events are connected by cause and effect, in order to create a logical and suspenseful narrative. Last but not least, the characters are individualized and their actions are psychologically motivated. Thus, the viewer takes on a new role: instead of behaving like a "gawker who stands alongside, held for the moment by curiosity or amazement," he now becomes a "spectator-in-the-text, absorbed into a fictional world." [14]

The characteristics of the "cinema of attractions" are usually explained with reference to two cultural contexts: vaudeville and modernity. Neither, however, is fully convincing. First, Anglo-American literature has correctly noted the similarity between the aesthetics of early cinema and of vaudeville, such as their programs of short numbers, composed on the principles of variety and spectacle. Furthermore, vaudeville was indeed an exhibition venue for early films. Vaudeville existed in similar forms in many Western countries; it was called "Varieté" (or "Variété") in Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden and "music hall" in Great Britain, France, and Italy. It is a form of theater that presented a program with short numbers of various specialties, from comedy skits, songs, and novelty dances to acrobatics. Variety theaters mainly offered popular, commercial entertainment. The measure of a successful performance was an audience that was enthused, amazed, and merry. Indeed, the aesthetics of the "cinema of attractions" has many similarities to the aesthetics of vaudeville. My data for Germany, however, which was an important market of the time, reveal that compared to fairgrounds, the spread of variety theaters was much too limited both in absolute numbers as well as type of geographical region. According to estimates, there were only around 200 variety theaters in Germany that showed films at the time, whereas 500 traveling cinemas

presented thousands of shows at fairs. [15] The fairground was also much more significant in terms of reach: for example, in 1905–6, the maximum capacity of variety theaters was approximately 3.5 million admissions, whereas the maximum capacity of fairground shows was approximately 67.5 million. [16] Furthermore, variety theaters only existed in larger cities, because permanent venues required a larger audience to be profitable. [17] In contrast, traveling cinemas reached the smallest towns and even rural audiences. In Germany, 59 percent of the shows of traveling cinemas were in medium-sized and small towns. [18] For example, in Silesia (a Prussian province around 1900, today a region of Poland), apart from the only large city Breslau (today Wrocław), traveling cinemas mainly visited the medium-size towns Görlitz, Grünberg, Glogau, Schweidnitz, Gleiwitz, and Beuthen, as well as many smaller towns, such as Glatz, Weißwasser, Schoppinitz, and Jauer. Traveling cinemas also appeared in rural towns such as Liebau, Groß-Wartenberg, and Godullahütte, and sometimes even in communities with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants, such as Wahlstatt. [19] In addition to these differences regarding reach and geographical spread, variety theaters and traveling cinemas differed with regard to their film programs: at least in Germany, the urban, international variety theaters that catered to an upscale audience specialized in films called *optische Berichterstattung* ("visual reports"), i.e., actualities showing the Emperor and his family, wars, or technical innovations, whereas traveling cinemas on fairgrounds primarily showed films that aimed to entertain with "attractions." [20]

Second, scholars have attempted to explain the emergence of the "cinema of attractions" by relating it to the wider cultural context of modernization. As Gunning has put it, "The cinema of attractions not only exemplifies a particularly modern form of aesthetics but also responds to the specifics of modern and especially urban life, what Benjamin and Kracauer understood as the drying up of experience and its replacement by a culture of distraction." [21] Proponents of the "modernity thesis," as David Bordwell has called it, claim that the changes brought about by modern life, such as urbanization, subjected contemporaries to a series of shocks, such as having

to cope with strong, constantly changing and unpleasant sensory stimulation while moving through modern traffic in the metropolis. [22] One can certainly detect similarities between this perceptual environment and the "cinema of attractions," which presented highly stimulating and quickly changing visual sensations. However, the interpretations of contemporary experience that build on theorists such as Georg Simmel have great difficulty with explaining why audiences took pleasure in activities that are claimed to be so similar to ones that are highly unpleasant. [23]

Irrespective of what the modernity thesis attempts to explain exactly and how, some of the claims commonly made in connection with it contradict empirical evidence. As the German example reveals, films were shown in large numbers in small towns that were hardly touched by modernization at the time. Furthermore, the output of early films of different countries is not necessarily in accord with their economic, social, and cultural development. For example, why did Great Britain, which was the most urbanized country in Europe around 1900, not produce more films than Germany, which was less urbanized? Why were the majority of early films produced in Europe rather than the United States, even though these two regions were similar in their degree of urbanization? Specifically, we know that 92 percent of the films offered on the German market before 1908 were European productions, and that the US market of permanent cinemas, which emerged between 1903 and 1906, was stimulated by European films (mostly those produced by the French company Pathé), before US films became dominant in their own country. [24]

As well as these contextualizations – vaudeville and modernity – may explain individual aspects, they miss the most proximate causes. Variety theater is too specific, whereas modernity is too unspecific to clearly explain why the "cinema of attractions" became the dominant aesthetics of early cinema. As I will argue, the cultural context where most of the early films were exhibited and for which they were mainly produced was the European fairground. I will show that this explains the particular aesthetics of these films, why they existed in such large numbers, and why most of them were produced in Europe. Even though modernization changed fairs as much as other forms of entertainment, the basic traditions of this cultural

institution were much older than the processes of modernization that are commonly regarded as having shaped early cinema.

Fairground Cinema

In contrast to the entertainment provided by permanent amusement parks such as the Prater in Vienna, fairs took place only once or at most a few times per year, mostly in spring, summer, and fall. Fairs lasted two or three days to two or three weeks.

In the course of the nineteenth century, markets, which offered many types of goods and services, increasingly developed into fun fairs. Visitors to fairs craved exciting sensations, such as the thrills of roller coasters, or unusual visual spectacles, such as anatomic museums, animal exhibitions, freak shows – and fairground cinemas. Fairground cinemas were buildings that could be dismantled and thus transported from place to place. They were run by professional showmen, who offered entertainment as a business. The market of traveling showmen was highly organized: it had its own, extensive trade press (often several competing journals in a given language), often several trade organizations (within the same country) and dozens of suppliers for equipment, many of which operated transnationally.

In contrast to variety theaters, which showed films as part of a live program, fairground cinemas showed mainly films. Their film programs, which were comprised of up to twelve films, were about 15–20 minutes long. They were usually accompanied by music from an organ, and sometimes commented on by lecturers.

Fairground cinemas were common in most European countries. [25] There are national and local studies on, for example, Great Britain, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany. [26] Fairground cinemas appeared as early as 1896. They developed rapidly, mostly from traveling variety theaters, but also from other entertainments, such as magic shows. Such venues were easily converted to cinemas by installing a screen and projector into the existing booth. Since the new attraction promised to be very lucrative, many showmen, such as Robert Melich from Germany,

Randall Williams from England, or Guiseppe Boaro from Italy, turned their establishments into cinemas as early as 1896–7.

In the beginning, fairground cinemas were small wooden booths with simple benches. Around 1902, however, a new type of fairground cinema appeared, the so-called "rolling palace" with 600–700 seats. [27] The façades of these luxurious buildings were elaborately decorated and spectacularly illuminated (Figure 17.1). A huge organ was integrated into the building. A contemporary observer described such a "rolling palace" thus:

> Herr Ludwig Ohr's cinematographic palace, built this winter [1904–5] and just now opened, is the sensation of Pirmasens. It truly deserves to be called a palace; something more splendid and magnificent can hardly be imagined. The façade is monumental.… It is 13 meters [43 feet] high in the middle, decorated with rich gilding, mirrors and ornaments as well as several larger-than-life-size statues, and every line is faultless. At night, the whole edifice is flooded with dazzling lights. Sixteen carbon-arc units and as many as 800 incandescent bulbs, arranged most tastefully, create an immense sea of light.… A giant concert organ was also greatly admired … and one was at a loss as to what to admire more: the marvelous music or the splendid façade.… The interior is equal to the exterior, and one is most pleasantly surprised by the elegant furnishings and the convenient positioning of seats as well as the entrances and exits; the best seats are arranged in ascending order and covered with red silk plush, just like the seats of a modern urban theater. [28]

"Modern urban theaters" were usually huge and expensive buildings. The design of the building, and the partitioning of the auditorium into stalls, balconies, and boxes, catered to the audience's desire for social distinction. The prices were graded according to the category of the seats. Fairground cinemas were modeled on such theaters. They were usually the greatest attraction on the fairground. At night, a sea of light signaled the special status of these establishments among the numerous booths. The letterhead of the showman Heinrich Hirdt advertised his cinema as having sixteen carbon arc units and 1,500 electric bulb lights. The magistrate of the city of Munich clearly appreciated the value of such cinemas as attractions,

because he chose the ones with the most elaborate buildings and allocated the best spots on the fairground to them. [29]

The buildings of fairground cinemas barely differed between countries, except for the name and some of the decorations on the façade. There was lively exchange across national borders. Just as showmen often bought their films, buildings, and equipment from foreign suppliers, they would travel abroad with their shows. For example, German showmen traveled to Austria-Hungary, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands, while showmen from various countries in turn appeared in Germany. Between 1897 and 1908, the Bläser family from the town of Worms not only visited Germany, but also Luxembourg, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. The Preiss family from Geneva toured Switzerland, Germany, and Austria-Hungary between 1899 and 1909.

Figure 17.1 Philipp Leilich's fairground cinema "Cinematograf" around 1907. Image courtesy of Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin.

It was the exchange of films across national borders, however, that made the "cinema of attractions" a truly international phenomenon. For example,

78 percent of the films offered on the German market before 1907 were foreign productions; the French company Pathé was the largest supplier with a market share of 38 percent. Many European film producers knew this market from their own experience; Charles Pathé had worked on the fairground himself. Pathé was a particularly successful film company because it produced exactly the type of films that were best suited for fairground cinema, and because it employed business strategies that were very effective in this context, such as competitive pricing and establishing subsidiaries in foreign countries. [30]

Fairground cinemas were a huge success. [31] For several years, business boomed so much that many showmen could afford to buy larger cinemas of a completely new and even more elaborate design every season. For example, the average size of the traveling cinemas appearing in the Munich Oktoberfest rose from 96 square meters in 1900 to 332 square meters in 1910. [32] This would not have been possible if audiences had not responded to the new medium with great enthusiasm. The profits achieved were extraordinary. For example, the showman Mandt from Bochum made about 25,000 marks in 1909, which was about equal to the average income of a higher civil servant at the time, and Mandt's company was not even one of the largest.

Audiences and Film Programs

Because European fairgrounds provided a large and relatively homogeneous market for films, a dominant film style developed that was particularly suited for this cultural context: the "cinema of attractions." Visitors to fairs, who came from all social groups, craved sensations. Originally, the term "attraction" was only used in the physical sense (as a force drawing objects toward each other). It was first transferred to cultural phenomena in the jargon of showmen during the nineteenth century, and spread to wider use from there. In the context of popular entertainment, an attraction is "a thing or feature which draws people by appealing to their desires, tastes, etc.; esp. any interesting or amusing exhibition which 'draws' crowds." [33] A look at the types of entertainment commonly offered on fairgrounds provides a

deeper insight into what the “attraction” of such activities was. Like variety theaters, fun fairs offered entertainment that did not involve narrative immersion and vicarious experience, but rather the testing of basic physical and psychic boundaries. The characteristic experience of fairground visitors is the excitement of losing and regaining control (physically on roller coasters, and psychologically by being confronted with something incomprehensible or horrible in magic shows and anatomical museums), without actually being in danger. Fairground entertainments, as well as similar forms such as variety shows, strove to offer their audiences an intense stimulation of the senses as well as a constant change in stimulation. Showmen aimed to attract patrons with novel, sensational forms of entertainment. In order to keep audiences interested and provide the greatest possible entertainment value, showmen were constantly looking for innovations that audiences would find even more appealing. One of these innovations was fairground cinema. Since fairground audiences craved novelty and increasing excitement, a chronological analysis of the “cinema of attractions” might even find that showmen attempted to increase its “attractivity” over time (the opulence of the buildings, technical sophistication of the equipment, subject matter, aesthetic innovations, etc.).

Fairground cinemas typically showed a program of several short films, which ran only about 15–20 minutes in total, because fairground visitors usually attended several attractions. The films offered attractions that were often already known from other shows, but attempted to make them even more spectacular. In magic shows, for example, illusions such as the “floating Neptuna” or the “woman without a head” were popular. Many of the early films shown on fairgrounds drew on such magic shows, especially those by George Méliès. [34] An illusion can be called magical if what is shown is impossible in reality. The fascination of such illusions is that viewers see something they know to be impossible. In films, such illusions can be enhanced by special effects (Figure 17.2). Or, wax museums and anatomical exhibits often included material of a sexual nature. Similarly, fairground cinemas often presented erotic films – usually depictions of “real,” “living,” nude women (usually in special showings for adults or men only). [35] At a time when relatively few images were available in general and in a culture that was very restrictive regarding sexual depictions, such

films were fascinating. Finally, images of exotic lands were already popular in magic lantern shows, but films made the representation more vivid and realistic. At a time when few people had the opportunity to travel to a foreign country, such films must have been particularly appealing. Hence early cinema drew on existing media that had proved popular, but it was even more attractive.

Figure 17.2 *Le spectre rouge* (*The Red Specter*, Pathé, 1907, no. 1711). Image courtesy of Filmarchiv Austria, Vienna.

Film shows provided more variety in a single program than other shows. Instead of just one magical illusion, several could be shown. Travelogues and local films could be added to such films so that other types of experiences, like the ones magic lantern shows or photographic booths provided, were incorporated as well. Furthermore, the degree of realism that was specific to the new medium not only enhanced pre-cinematic illusions, but also provided opportunities for entirely new effects. Compared to stage performances of magic tricks, cinema could present even more amazing feats: objects moved without the help of a human hand and men were turned into women and vice versa in films such as *Illusions funambulesques* (*Extraordinary Illusions*, Méliès, 1903, nos. 512–13) and *Les transmutations imperceptibles* (*The Imperceptible Transmutations*, Méliès, 1904, nos. 556–7). In *Le chevalier mystère* (*The Mysterious Knight*, Méliès,

1899, nos. 226–7), a head without a body, skewered on a sword, talks to its tormentor. Furthermore, performances by prominent artists such as Méliès, who could only be seen live in venues such as the Robert-Houdin Theater in Paris, could now be enjoyed by rural audiences and in other countries. A film such as *Escamotage d'une dame chez Robert Houdin* (*The Vanishing Lady*, Méliès, 1896, no. 70) explicitly refers to its theatrical origin. Finally, all this was available for the same or even a significantly lower price than other attractions.

A European Institution

Both in Europe and in countries outside Europe, films were presented in buildings that primarily served other purposes, such as opera houses, hotels, hospitals, or town halls. Well-known examples of traveling showmen who used such venues were Lyman H. Howe and Edwin J. Hadley in the United States, [36] Wilfrid Picard, J.-B. Paradis, and William Shaw in Canada, [37] Leonard Corrick and his family in Australia and various Asian countries, [38] the Polish brothers Wladylaw and Antoni Krzeminiski in the Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Russia, [39] Willy Leuzinger in Switzerland, [40] and Wendel Marzen in Germany. [41] Such film shows were presented for profit or for free, to entertain or to educate, or as a part of religious devotion. Last but not least, in many countries, variety theaters showed films as one of the numbers of their stage shows. [42]

While some forms of film exhibition, such as town hall shows and variety shows, existed in many countries beyond Europe, fairground cinemas were the dominant form of film exhibition that was specific to Europe. Fairs were based on two cultural traditions that had developed over a period of several hundred years: trade and religious festivals. After cities had won a degree of independence in the Middle Ages and guilds had emerged as trade organizations, an extensive network of trade developed. *Jahrmärkte* ("annual markets") offered everything from goods for everyday needs to luxury items – but also entertainment, which was provided by professional showmen. Such events were often connected with the festivals of the

Catholic Church, for example church consecration festivals. With respect to Max Weber's concept of the "Protestant ethic," [43] one could speak of a "Catholic ethic" that was supportive of leisure and entertainment. Hence, Catholic rituals and festivals, which were characterized by visual spectacle, theatricality, and sensual pleasure, were influential beyond religious practices.

By contrast, Protestantism, which began its rise in central Europe in the sixteenth century, with its dogmas of predestination and asceticism, promoted capitalist ideals of work that were in conflict with the established traditions of festivals. Even though most Protestants probably valued entertainment as much as Catholics did, traveling cinemas appeared more frequently in Catholic regions, at least in Germany, because the official church of Protestant regions restricted the number and length of festivals. [44] In comparison, fairs and traveling cinema shows were much more widespread in Great Britain, because even though the Church of England was Protestant in its theology, it was Catholic in its liturgy and practices.

Furthermore, fairground cinema was only able to develop in such a form and extent where a transportation existed that allowed the transportation of such huge buildings over long distances. Certainly fairs existed long before the development of the railroad, when showmen used horse-drawn carts as a means of transportation. Around 1900, traveling cinemas could be transported either by horse cart or by lokomobiles (a steam-powered traction machine). British showmen seem to have preferred the latter option. [45] But for the largest "rolling palaces" as well as the longest distances, the railway was the most suitable means of transport. In continental Europe, most showmen used the railway. [46] An entire train was sometimes needed for a single cinema building. [47] Between 1890 and 1911, Europe had the best-developed railway network in the world. It was so extensive that in many countries almost every small town could be reached. The transportation infrastructure was thus an important factor in the spread of traveling cinema. An illustration of this can be found in the concept "net density," defined as the ratio of the length of all the traffic connections within a region in relation to its size. In the period in question, the net density of the railway in Europe rose from 21.3 to 32.2, in America from

7.7 to 12.6, in Australia from 2.2 to 3.8, in Asia from 0.7 to 2.3, and in Africa from 0.3 to 1.3. Countries where we know that traveling cinemas existed all had a railway net density of at least 40.0 by 1890, such as Belgium (182.0), Great Britain (102.9), Germany (79.2), Switzerland (77.1), France (68.7), Italy (45.0), and Austria-Hungary (40.1). The United States had the highest railway net density on the American continent at the time (27.3), but it was far below that of the European countries where traveling cinemas were common. [48] Furthermore, the United States did not have a comparable culture of markets and festivals.

Summary and Discussion

In conclusion, the "cinema of attractions" is the cinema of European fairgrounds around 1900. Fairground culture was mainly a European phenomenon. Furthermore, it was only in Europe that a railway network existed that allowed the transportation of huge cinema buildings to the furthest regions of a country and beyond its borders. Consequently, it was only in Europe that fairground cinema became the dominant form of film exhibition.

Since European fairgrounds provided a large market for films, the "cinema of attractions" developed as a dominant film style. The patrons of fairground cinemas craved intense stimulation of the senses as well as novelty. The characteristic experience of fairground cinema visitors is the excitement of losing and regaining control by being confronted with excitement, novelty, and the incomprehensible, without actually being in danger. Fairground cinemas provided such entertainment to an even greater extent than previous attractions.

Like the roller coaster or the magic show, the "cinema of attractions" was popular across cultures and not culturally differentiated. In contrast, classical narrative cinema was based on culturally specific traditions and consequently less accessible for other cultures. [49] Thus, the European "cinema of attractions" could be exploited in US variety theaters as well. In contrast, in the 1920s, hardly any European films of classical narrative

cinema were shown in US cinemas, and conversely, Hollywood films were less popular than domestic ones in most European countries. [50]

When we recognize that the European fairground was the dominant form of exhibition for early films, the contradictions and problems connected with the usual contextualizations, namely vaudeville and modernity, disappear. The aesthetics of the "cinema of attractions" can be explained by the fact that it was perfectly suited for the cultural context in which it was presented. Furthermore, the size of the market explains the large number of films that were in circulation at the time.

It is hoped that the arguments in this essay will stimulate further research and reinvigorate discussion of the concept "cinema of attractions." I would like to conclude with a few suggestions for further research and discussion. To test the hypothesis that European fairgrounds rather than variety theaters were the dominant market for the "cinema of attractions," local studies of more European countries are necessary. Some countries are better researched than others (Great Britain more than France, for example), and for some countries hardly any research seems to exist at all (such as Spain). The present study provides a useful hypothesis for this research: fairground cinema is more likely to have existed in those countries where Catholicism played a major role and where the density of the railway network was greater than 40.0. Finally, for most countries, including the United States, hardly any comprehensive, quantitative data on variety theaters that showed films has been compiled (total numbers, size of the cities in which they were located, etc.).

On the basis of the hypothesis that the dominance of the "cinema of attractions" is closely connected with the traveling film shows of European fairgrounds between 1896 and 1910, the concept "cinema of attractions" itself might be rethought. Firstly, since many different forms of film exhibition existed in parallel at the time, it is not necessary to subsume all early films made before 1907 under the concept "cinema of attractions." Forms of exhibition and types of films that also existed at the time, such as actualities shown in high-class variety theaters, which were mainly patronized by the upper social classes, or passion plays shown in churches to inspire religious devotion, differed significantly from films shown on fairgrounds. A film of the arrival of a train or of children at play offered a

different type of experience for the contemporary audience than a magic illusion or an erotic scene. Whereas the first type of film showed scenes that were familiar from everyday life, the second type of film presented things that were not possible or taboo in reality. Indeed, early cinema was an extremely heterogeneous period of film history with respect to film aesthetics, programming practices, exhibition venues (fairground cinemas, variety theaters, town hall shows), operators (showmen, lecturers, stage artists), purposes (entertainment, education, propaganda, religious devotion), and audiences (age, gender, social strata). On this basis, the debate between Gunning and Musser, as to whether attractions really dominated the first decade of the cinema, can be reconceptualized. [51] We find a more convincing answer if we not only analyze the films as such, but also take into account the context in which they were shown. In this manner, the analysis of the aesthetics of these films would be likely to become more precise. Furthermore, as Musser has suggested, the unit of analysis most fruitful for understanding early cinema is the film program rather than the individual film. [52] Programming principles, such as variety, contrast, and build-up toward a climax provided further attractions beyond those of individual films. Finally, when aesthetics are connected directly with exhibition practices, it becomes clearer why the dichotomy of "attractions vs. narrative" has proven to be problematical for periodization. Beginning around 1906, a narrative cinema developed in Europe, but primarily in films that were made for permanent cinemas, which presented entertainment that was patterned on dramatic theater. While narrative films were the exception on fairgrounds, they became the dominant fare in permanent cinemas. [53] Despite the emergence of permanent cinemas, traveling cinemas continued to present their alternative form of film entertainment, i.e., programs of short films, until around 1910, when permanent cinemas and classical narrative cinema along with them became dominant.

The concept "attraction" should be redefined with reference to the immediate, historical context, rather than to theories with little direct connection to the fairground, such as Eisenstein's. For Eisenstein, as quoted above, an "attraction" was "any aggressive moment in the theater." His aim was to counteract the presumed ideological effects of mainstream illusionist

theater, and instead to “shock” the audience into revolutionary awareness and action. Fairground cinema did not have such ambitions. Its aim was perfectly expressed in the contemporary meaning of the term “attraction” as explained above. Even thrills of a highly stimulating or controversial sort must still be experienced as pleasant to be popular, and audiences at fairgrounds were hardly seeking to be ideologically (re)educated. Thus, Eisenstein’s terms “shock” and “aggression” do not seem fitting descriptions of the spectator’s experience of the “cinema of attractions,” because shock and aggression are unpleasant.

To conclude, it is my conviction that the concept “cinema of attractions” is still very well suited to understanding early cinema. However, I propose to redefine the concept in accordance with the original meaning of “attraction” and to limit its application to a specific type of film, rather than extend it to early cinema in general. If it is true that different markets demanded different types of films, then the dominance of a certain aesthetics can be best explained by the economic significance of its main market. In particular, empirical evidence suggests that the European fairground was the market with which the “cinema of attractions” was most closely connected: the most typical films of the “cinema of attractions” were primarily produced for this market (which does not preclude that they were also shown in other suitable contexts, e.g., exported to US variety theaters). Hence I regard it as worthwhile to pursue the concept as introduced by Gunning and Gaudreault, but to (re)define and (re)contextualize it in its immediate, historical origin, while continuing to add to our knowledge of this context with empirical research.

Translated by Annemone Ligensa

Notes

1 Charles Musser, “Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 203–32, reprinted in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 389–416.

2 See for example Strauven, *Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*.

3 Gerben Bakker, “The Decline and Fall of the European Film Industry: Sunk Costs, Market Size and Market Structure, 1890–1927,” *Economic History Working Papers* 70, no. 3 (2003): 7.

4 See for example Friedrich von Zglinicki, *Der Weg des Films: Die Geschichte der Kinematographie und ihrer Vorläufer* (Berlin: Rembrandt, 1956); Jacques Deslandes and Jacques Richard, *Histoire comparée du cinéma*, vol. 2, *Du cinématographe au cinéma 1896–1906* (Tournai: Casterman, 1968); Jacques Garnier, *Forains d’hier et d’aujourd’hui* (Paris: Les Presses, 1968).

5 Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,” *Wide Angle* 8, nos. 3–4 (1986): 63–70, reprinted in Strauven, *Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 381–8.

6 See for example Ernst Kieninger, “Das klassische Wanderkino 1896–1914: Filmkommunikation auf dem Weg zur Institution am Beispiel Niederösterreich und Umland” (master’s thesis, University of Vienna, 1992); Blaise Aurora, *Histoire du cinéma en Lorraine: Du cinématographe au cinéma forain 1896–1914* (Metz: Éditions Serpenoise, 1996); Kevin Scrivens and Stephen Smith, *The Travelling Cinematograph Show* (Tweedale: New Era Publications, 1999); Guido Convents, *Van kinetoscoop tot café-ciné: De eerste jaren van de film in België 1894–1908* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2000); Aldo Bernardini, *Gli ambulanti: Cinema italiano delle origini* (Gemona: La Cineteca del Friuli, 2001); Martin Loiperdinger, ed., *Travelling Cinema in Europe: Sources and Perspectives* (Frankfurt: Stroemfeld, 2008); Joseph Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung: Zur Etablierung des Films in Deutschland, 1896–1914* (Frankfurt: Stroemfeld, 2010).

7 Tom Gunning, “Cinema of Attractions,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 178–82.

8 André Gaudreault, “From ‘Primitive Cinema’ to ‘Kine-Attractography’,” in Strauven, *Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, 98.

9 Gunning, “The Cinema of Attraction,” 384–5.

10 Sergei M. Eisenstein, “The Montage of Attractions,” in *The Eisenstein Reader*, ed. Richard Taylor (London: BFi, 1998), 30.

11 Musser, “Rethinking Early Cinema.”

12 Gunning, “Cinema of Attractions,” 126.

13 Ibid., 125.

14 Tom Gunning, “The Whole Town’s Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7, no. 2 (1994): 190.

15 Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 55. The data on films and fairground cinemas in Germany and its neighboring countries stem from the large databases that were compiled by the research project “Industrialization of Perception” at the University of Siegen, Germany between 2003 and 2009. It was supervised by the author and funded by the DFG (German Research Foundation). The database on fairground cinemas (1896–1926, 6,966 shows) illustrates the spread of the new medium by German showmen in Central Europe. The database on film programs (1905–14, 1,152 programs), which comprises film programs from nine German cities of different sizes and regions, illustrates the programming trends of permanent cinemas. The database on film supply (1895–1920, 45,434 films) provides the basis for analyzing what types of films were offered on the German market, e.g., regarding their national origin, production companies, length, etc. These databases are available online: http://www.-earlycinema.uni-koeln.de . For a more detailed description see Joseph Garncarz and Michael Ross, “Die Siegener Datenbanken zum frühen Kino in Deutschland,” *KINtop* 14–15 (2006): 151–63.

16 Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 50 and 124. It is very likely that there were more variety theaters and traveling cinemas than are documented, so the actual numbers will have been larger.

17 For Belgium see Convents, *Van kinetoscoop tot café-ciné*, 224–7.

18 Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 121–6.

19 Joseph Garncarz, “‘Byliśmy na jarmarku’: Kina objazdowe na Śląsku przed pierwszą wojną światową,” in *Wrocław b ę dzie miastem filmowym: Z dziejów kina w stolicy Dolnego Ś l ą ska*, eds. Andrzej Dębski and Marek Zybura (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo, 2008), 13–28.

20 Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 30–47 and 99–121.

21 Tom Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator,” in *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1995), 126.

22 David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

23 Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” in *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, eds. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1997), 174–86; see for further thoughts on this question Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

24 Joseph Garncarz, “The Emergence of Nationally Specific Film Cultures in Europe, 1911–1914,” in *Early Cinema and the “National”*, eds. Richard Abel, Giorgio Bertellini, and Rob King (New Barnet: John Libbey, 2008), 187–8; Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 20–37.

25 Mark E. Swartz, “An Overview of Cinema on the Fairgrounds,” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 15, no. 3 (1987): 102–8; Joseph Garncarz, “The Fairground Cinema – A European Institution,” in Loiperdinger, *Travelling Cinema in Europe*, 79–90.

26 For Great Britain, see Scrivens and Smith, *The Travelling Cinematograph Show*; Vanessa Toulmin, “‘With the Reach of All’: Travelling Cinematograph Shows on British Fairgrounds 1896–1914,” in Loiperdinger, *Travelling Cinema in Europe*, 19–33. For Italy, see Bernardini, *Gli ambulanti*. For Austria-Hungary, see Kieninger, “Das Klassische Wanderkino 1896–1914”; Christian Kubo, “Institution Wanderkino: Die Etablierung von Film und Kino als Unterhaltungsinstitution im ländlichen Raum durch das organisierte Wanderkino in Österreich” (master’s thesis, University of Vienna, 1993). For Belgium, see Guido Convents, “Motion Picture Exhibitors on Belgian Fairgrounds,” *Film History* 6, no. 2 (1994): 238–49, and *Van kinetoscoop tot café-ciné*. For Luxembourg, see Paul Lesch, “Travelling Cinematograph Shows in Luxembourg,” in Loiperdinger, *Travelling Cinema in Europe*, 103–17. For Germany, see Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 71–126.

27 For Great Britain see for example Scrivens and Smith, *The Travelling Cinematograph Show*, 10–13; for Germany Garncarz, *Maßlose*

Unterhaltung, 86–92; for Austria-Hungary Kieninger, “Das Klassische Wanderkino 1896–1914,” 155–61.

28 *Der Komet* 1042 (March 11, 1905): 11, quoted in Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 71.

29 Joseph Garncarz, “‘Die schönsten und elegantesten Geschäfte dieser Branche’: Wanderkinos in München 1896–1913,” in *Für ein Zehnerl ins Paradies: Münchner Kinogeschichte*, ed. Monika Lerch-Stumpf (Munich: Dölling and Galitz, 2004), 36–46.

30 Michel Marie and Laurent Le Forestier, eds., *La firme Pathé Frères 1896–1914* (Paris: AFRHC, 2004).

31 Toulmin, “‘With the Reach of All’”; Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 121–6.

32 Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 88.

33 *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “attraction,” 2010, http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/12911 .

34 Matthew Solomon, “Fairground Illusions and the Magic of Méliès,” in Loiperdinger, *Travelling Cinema in Europe*, 35–45.

35 Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 114–21.

36 Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Edward Lowry, “Edwin J. Hadley: Travelling Film Exhibitor,” in *Film Before Griffith*, ed. John L. Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 131–43.

37 Pierre Véronneau, “Cinéma ambulant et implantation urbaine: l’activité de William Shaw dans le contexte des Cantons-de-l’Est,” *Cinémas* 6, no. 1 (1995): 47–80 and “The Creation of a Film Culture by Traveling Exhibitors in Rural Québec Prior to World War II,” *Film History* 6, no. 2 (1994): 250–61.

38 Leslie Anne Lewis, “The Corrick Collection: A Case Study in Asia-Pacific Itinerant Film Exhibition (1901–1914),” *NFSA Journal* 2, no. 2 (2007): 1–12.

39 Malgorzata Hendrykowska, “Film Journeys of the Krzeminiski Brothers, 1900–1908,” *Film History* 6, no. 2 (1994): 206–18.

40 Mariann Lewinsky, “Schweizer National Cinema Leuzinger, Rapperswil (SG): Aktualitätenfilmproduktionen und regionale Kinogeschichte der Zentral- und Ostschweiz, 1896–1945,” *KINtop* 9 (2000): 65–81.

41 Brigitte Braun, “Lokalaufnahmen der Familie Marzen in Trier,” in *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland* , vol. 1, *Kaiserreich 1895–1918* , eds. Uli Jung and Martin Loiperdinger (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005), 197–203.

42 Robert C. Allen, *Vaudeville and Film 1895–1915: A Study in Media Interaction* (New York: Arno, 1980); Convents, *Van kinetoscoop tot café-ciné*; Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 17–68.

43 Max Weber, “Die protestantische Ethik und der “Geist” des Kapitalismus,” *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 20 (1904): 1–54; and 21 (1905): 1–110. For the English version, see *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T. Parsons (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930).

44 Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 123–4.

45 Arthur Fay, *Bioscope Shows and Their Engines* (Lingfield: Oakwood Press, 1966); Scrivens and Smith, *The Travelling Cinematograph Show*; Toulmin, “‘With the Reach of All’.”

46 Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 98; Kieninger, “Das Klassische Wanderkino 1896–1914,” 156; Aurora, *Histoire du cinéma en Lorraine*, 107.

47 Bernardini, *Gli ambulanti*, 45.

48 The calculations of railway density were made by the author on the basis of data found in contemporary statistics: *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*, vol. 34, *1913* (Berlin: Puttkammer & Mühlbrecht, 1913), appendix, 42–3.

49 Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 176–89.

50 See for example, for France, Colin Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); for Germany Joseph Garncarz, “Hollywood in Germany: The Role of American Films in Germany, 1925–1990,” in *Hollywood in Europe*, eds. David Ellwood and Rob Kroes (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), 94–135.

51 Musser, “Rethinking Early Cinema”; Gunning, “Cinema of Attractions,” 124–7.
52 Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*, 87–90.
53 Garncarz, *Maßlose Unterhaltung*, 176–89.

18

Early Film Programs

An Overture, Five Acts, and an Interlude

Richard Abel

Overture

Consider the Parisians who were lucky enough to see one of the first Lumière Cinématographe programs in late 1895, the Levantines (European immigrants) who frequented the Cirque de Péra variety shows in Istanbul in early 1899, the families who attended the Grand Theater vaudeville programs in Portland, Oregon in March 1905, the shoppers and white collar workers who dropped in to the Radium Theater (a nickelodeon) in Des Moines, Iowa in May 1907, and the movie fans who sought out the Star Theater in Pawtucket, Rhode Island in January 1913 or the Colonial Theater in Des Moines several months later. Not only would these diverse audiences have encountered very different motion pictures at each of those five moments, they also would have experienced them within equally different *program formats*. But what do those terms mean? A *program*, Nico de Klerk writes, can be defined as "a number of discrete attractions sequenced by an organizing agent with the design to regulate audience involvement, usually for the duration of a single visit"; *formats* then refers to the "standardized" ways those constituent elements, whether homogeneous or heterogeneous, can be arranged for coherence.[1] Yet what remained constant throughout this period was the ephemeral nature of motion pictures, their

relatively short “shelf life,” even their “planned obsolescence.” This essay aims to map those changes in motion picture programming over the course of the first twenty years of cinema’s emergence as a major form of mass entertainment, primarily in North America and Europe but with additional references to exhibition in other regions of the world. Such mapping, however, has to begin with some explanation for the persistently ephemeral nature of individual film subjects.

The manufacturers, inventors, entrepreneurs, and showmen initially attracted to motion pictures found their interests largely shaped by economic, technological, and legal issues. Much capital investment went into the development and sale of celluloid film stock (e.g., Lumière, Eastman Kodak) and a range of apparatuses for capturing and projecting moving images (e.g., Lumière, Edison, Gaumont, Pathé-Frères) because those products quickly proved profitable. Moreover, for several years film stock was available in relatively short rolls (100–300 feet), matching the restricted operational capacity of early devices. Indeed, especially in the case of Lumière, Edison, and Gaumont, film subjects often served as promotional tools for the company’s devices. In the United States, Edison specifically sought to control the emerging industry by means of patents on its devices, mounting a series of acrimonious court cases against rivals for alleged infringement. Not until around 1902 did Pathé realize that just as much or even more money could come from making and selling a large quantity of film prints, even if, with little or no copyright protection, they were vulnerable to duping. Yet, in North America, Europe, and elsewhere, film prints continued to be sold directly to exhibitors, who could modify them in all kinds of ways for their own purposes. Even after rental exchanges emerged in the mid-1900s as a more efficient means of managing the dissemination of motion pictures, film prints tended to circulate for a limited period of time before being recalled and destroyed – or simply wearing out. For a horrific example of motion pictures’ ephemeral existence as late as 1909–11, think of Pathé’s quarrel with Eastman Kodak over the purchase of the latter’s film stock and the French company’s decision to develop its own manufacturing capability. During the year or more before its new factories could supply the company’s needs, Pathé collected used positive copies of its films from around the world,

stripped the old emulsion from the celluloid and applied a fresh layer, recycling the old as new again.

It is no wonder, then, that certain metaphors quickly became attached to motion pictures. Manufacturers allegedly ground them out like sausages, comically suggested in early titles such as American Mutoscope and Biograph's *The Sausage Machine* (1897). They produced them in large quantities (Pathé, for instance, was circulating hundreds of prints of each film title by the mid-1900s), much like the packaged soups, cereals, and crackers promoted through a new system of mass marketing: for an analogous process, see Cricks & Martin's *A Visit to Peek Frean and Co.'s Biscuit Works* (1906). In other words, whether they appeared as one of several interchangeable vaudeville acts or as a "seen today/gone tomorrow" item on a nickelodeon program, motion pictures were assumed to be just another novelty attraction or mass marketed consumer good. Exhibitors purchased them knowing that their prints soon could be discarded or recycled, and audiences imbibed them knowing they could get another "drink," of whatever brand or kind, the following day or week. This "common sense" ephemeral quality persisted despite early efforts to preserve at least some motion pictures. Bóleslaw Matuszewski, for instance, in *Une nouvelle source de l'histoire* (1898), promoted the idea of a "dépôt de cinématographie historique" (historical film depository), similar to nineteenth-century museums of photography, that would be devoted to the alleged objectivity of non-fiction films.[2] It also persisted despite the extended shelf life of a select number of increasingly dominant fiction films. Pathé, for instance, produced three different versions of *La vie et la passion de Jésus Christ* (*The Life and Passion of Christ*, 1902–3, 1907, 1913), and the 1907 "edition" was so popular that prints were screened repeatedly during the next five years. Once Mary Pickford became a movie star and chose to make feature films for Famous Players in 1913, Biograph rereleased many of her early one-reelers for inclusion in the General Film Company's weekly programs. Similarly, when French film production halted for nearly a year during World War I, Film d'Art rereleased some of its early titles in order to ensure that French cinemas would have at least some French films to screen.

Act I: Novelty Era Programming

Early advertisements suggest that motion picture programming underwent at least four crucial if somewhat schematic changes during the first twenty years of cinema's development into a major form of mass entertainment. André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion have helpfully identified the three stages of a "graduated process" in this development: (1) "the sudden *apparition* of a technological process, the apparatus"; (2) "the *emergence* of an initial culture, that of 'moving pictures'"; and (3) "the *constitution* of an established media institution."[3] Within each of the second and third stages, two different kinds of programming emerged, all four of which would continue to function, but in varying degrees, within institutional cinema of the 1910s.

Promoted as the demonstration of a technological novelty that could "magically" reproduce life-like movement, motion pictures and their projecting apparatus initially featured as an exclusive attraction in a range of venues. Although several inventor-entrepreneurs presented their devices in earlier public showings (Ottomar Anschütz, Grey and Otway Latham, Thomas Armat, and C. Francis Jenkins),[4] Lumière established this program format throughout 1896 by showcasing the marvels of both its Cinématographe machine and the films it could project in rented theaters and halls in major European and North American metropolises (such as London, New York, Rome, Vienna, St. Petersburg) and then by directing its trained operators to travel across the globe (to Montreal, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Bombay, Lagos), capturing ever more motion pictures and profitably disseminating the wonder of their novelty. The relatively short programs, approximately fifteen minutes, could be comprised of prints that operators carried with them, new ones shipped out to them during their travels, and films that they shot and developed on location. Exhibition venues included legitimate theaters, music halls, hotels, cafés, beer halls, teahouses, bathhouses, public gardens, amusement parks, fairs, and even royal palaces. Other companies and entrepreneurs demonstrated their apparatuses and films within very similar program formats. Edison contracted with Raff & Gammon, for instance, to have its Vitascope machine project short films in vaudeville theaters in many US cities

throughout 1896, and entrepreneurs briefly presented Vitascope programs in such countries as Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Chile. At the same time, R. W. Paul used his “celebrated Animatographe” or Theatrograph to project “animated pictures of real life” for months in music hall shows in London, Brighton, and elsewhere in Great Britain;[5] he also sent trained operators to promote his apparatus and films across Europe and as far away as Canada, Argentina, and South Africa. Less successfully, Max and Emil Skladanowsky in Germany sought to sell their unique double-band Bioskop projector in 15-minute programs at the Wintergarden in Berlin, the Tivoli amusement park in Copenhagen, and various music halls in the Netherlands. Any future for early motion pictures initially seemed indeterminate – whether as science, entertainment, or education – but shows grew more frequent as they increasingly targeted mass audiences.[6]

Act II: Traveling Motion Picture Shows

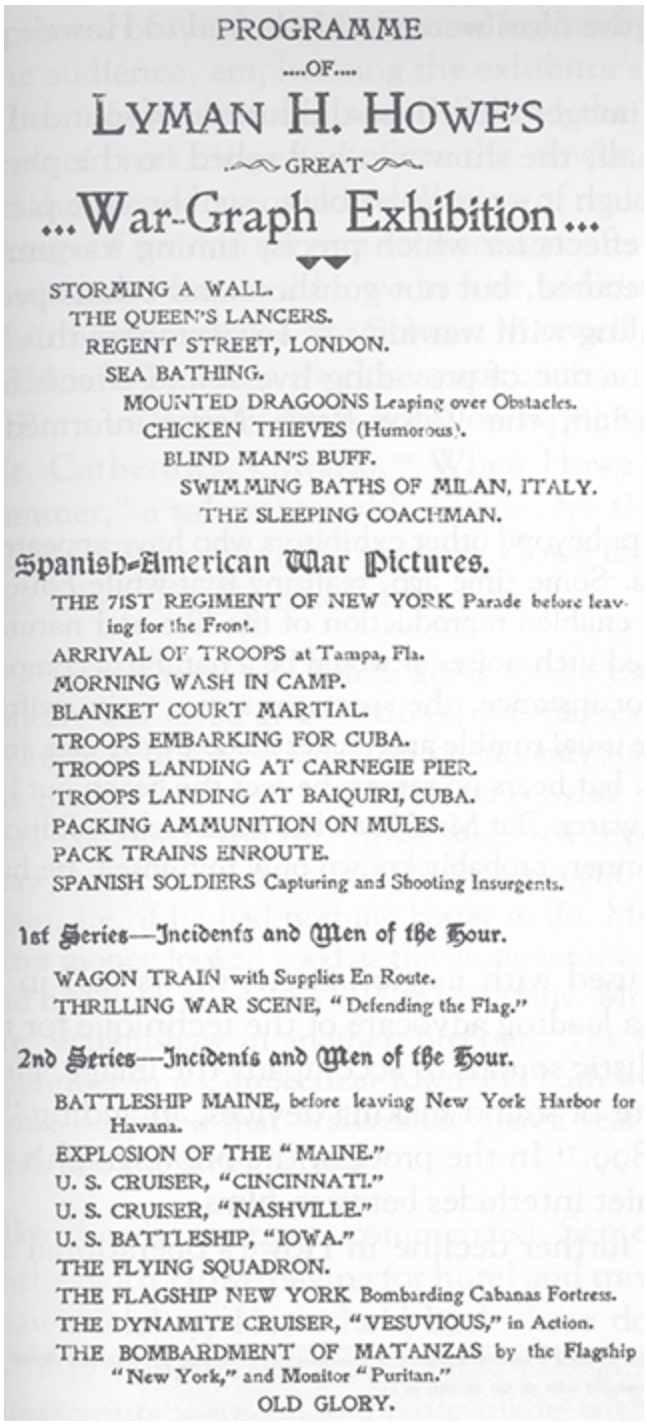
For some half a dozen years after 1897–8, as this initial novelty period waned, motion picture programming developed along two parallel trajectories. Until recently the less researched trajectory involved itinerant or traveling showmen who continued, with modifications, the practice initiated by Lumière operators. Although they have been treated “as a romantic interlude … a kind of sideshow on the way to ‘real’ exhibition,” writes Deac Rossell,[7] in many countries showmen largely defined the way audiences experienced motion pictures as they moved from one location to another, often following routes already tracked by earlier touring performers. Their programs consisted of a heterogeneous selection from their repository of purchased films, programs they could either repeat or vary depending on local conditions. In India, for instance, J. F. Maden and Abdully Esoofally made annual treks far into the vast countryside beyond Bombay and Calcutta, respectively, equipped with enough European films to mount two or three different programs.[8] Other showmen, with similar programs of mainly French and British films, toured the colonial regions of

Africa, remote areas of South America, and the islands of the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). In Mexico, for six years after scandals led authorities to close the capital's few motion picture theaters in 1900, only itinerant showmen were permitted to exhibit motion pictures.[9] How showmen in any of these and other countries selected and organized their films into more or less coherent programs has been difficult to determine because so few sources of information survive. Yet what can be surmised is that they tended to present more or less exclusive programs of motion pictures and to renew their stock of films when needed in order to mount "ever fresh" attractions. Such showmen continued to tour their programs in small towns and villages, surprisingly even in some industrialized countries, well into the 1920s and 1930s.

More information survives about the programming practices of specific traveling showmen. In North America, the best known was Lyman H. Howe, a famous illustrated lecturer who quickly included more and more motion pictures in his touring phonograph/lantern slide programs. An early example, the 1898 "Great War-Graph Exhibition," loosely arranged most of its thirty short films into a narrative of the Spanish–American War.[10] His 1901 program of nearly fifty films was an even more elaborate structure of eight parts (with two overture intermissions), the most important of which focused on European royalty, the Paris Exposition, and the Boer–British War.[11] Initially presenting his programs in churches and town halls, by 1907 Howe was managing four or five companies that booked legitimate theaters and vaudeville houses in major cities on an annual basis, sometimes for weeks. As late as May 1911, his "Travel Festival" played for a month at Cleveland's downtown Colonial Theater, with each week's program of non-fiction films devoted to a different theme: the burial of the *Maine*, a tour of Germany, a review of the US Navy, and tours of the Alps, Tibet, and Singapore.[12] D. W. Robertson, another educator–entertainer, became a top-billed attraction with his two-hour Edison Projectoscope programs of lectured motion pictures and music at summer Chautauqua assemblies throughout the Midwest.[13] In July 1899, at the two-week Midland Chautauqua in Iowa, his Spanish–American war films, *Cinderella*, and *The Man in the Moon at Close Range* "evoked a storm of applause."[14]

Beginning in 1903–4, Archie Shepherd traveled routes paralleling Howe's in New England, but he presented two-hour programs of motion pictures (fiction and non-fiction) and illustrated songs to working-class audiences on Sundays, first in tents and then in town halls and theaters, frequently renewing his stock of films so that he could repeatedly revisit cities and towns on his annual circuit.[15] In Great Britain, from 1898 through the early 1910s, A. J. West toured a lengthy patriotic *Our Navy* show (lectures, lantern slides, non-fiction films, and music) in a variety of halls throughout England and Scotland; the show was so popular that West, like Howe, established companies to tour Canada and Australia.[16]

Figure 18.1 Lyman H. Howe's Great War-Graph Exhibition, 1898.



PROGRAMME

....OF....

LYMAN H. HOWE'S

GREAT

...War-Graph Exhibition...

STORMING A WALL.
THE QUEEN'S LANCERS.
REGENT STREET, LONDON.
SEA BATHING.
MOUNTED DRAGOONS Leaping over Obstacles.
CHICKEN THIEVES (Humorous).
BLIND MAN'S BUFF.
SWIMMING BATHS OF MILAN, ITALY.
THE SLEEPING COACHMAN.

Spanish-American War Pictures.

THE 71ST REGIMENT OF NEW YORK Parade before leaving for the Front.
ARRIVAL OF TROOPS at Tampa, Fla.
MORNING WASH IN CAMP.
BLANKET COURT MARTIAL.
TROOPS EMBARKING FOR CUBA.
TROOPS LANDING AT CARNEGIE PIER.
TROOPS LANDING AT BAIQUIRI, CUBA.
PACKING AMMUNITION ON MULES.
PACK TRAINS ENROUTE.
SPANISH SOLDIERS Capturing and Shooting Insurgents.

1st Series—Incidents and Men of the Hour.

WAGON TRAIN with Supplies En Route.
THRILLING WAR SCENE, "Defending the Flag."

2nd Series—Incidents and Men of the Hour.

BATTLESHIP MAINE, before leaving New York Harbor for Havana.
EXPLOSION OF THE "MAINE."
U. S. CRUISER, "CINCINNATI."
U. S. CRUISER, "NASHVILLE."
U. S. BATTLESHIP, "IOWA."
THE FLYING SQUADRON.
THE FLAGSHIP NEW YORK Bombarding Cabanas Fortress.
THE DYNAMITE CRUISER, "VESUVIOUS," in Action.
THE BOMBARDMENT OF MATANZAS by the Flagship "New York," and Monitor "Puritan."
OLD GLORY.

Figure 18.2 Sckramson's Grand Biorama program, ca. 1900.

GRAND

BIORAMA

Le plus grand établissement qui voyage en son genre

Eclairé à l'électricité (24 chevaux)

POUR 8 JOURS SEULEMENT

Représentations extraordinaires de Photographies animées (grandeur nature)

Dimanche, Lundi, Mardi, à 8 h. 1/2

LES GRANDES COURSES DE TAUREAUX

★ FREGOLI ★

De l'Olympia de Paris, dans ses transformations instantanées

LA LUNE A UN MÈTRE

Grande Féerie fantastique en 150 transformations

BALLET DE L'OPÉRA

Vues militaires. — L'Auberge ensorcellée

Mercredi, Jeudi à 8 h. 1/2

★ CENDRILLON ★

Féerie merveilleuse en 700 transformations

Les Episodes de la Guerre au Transvaal

LE PRÉSIDENT KRUGER EN FRANCE

ROBERT & BERTRAND — *L'Agent plongeur*

LA MÉGÈRE RÉCALCITRANTE — *Danses Cosmopolites*

Vendredi, à 8 h. 1/2. Représentation spéciale

La Vie et la Passion de N.-S. Jésus-Christ

En 13 Tableaux, d'après les grands maîtres de l'art religieux

LE TRIOMPHE DIVIN — *Grande fantaisie en 150 transformations*

PÉLERINAGE A N.-D. DE LOURDES — *Vues prises sur le vif*

EN SUPPLÉMENT A CHAQUE PROGRAMME

Série de Tableaux militaires, Scènes maritimes enfantines, scientifiques et amusantes

AUDITION DE L'HOMOPHONE, LE PHONOGRAPHE GEANT

MISS BETSY

Dans ses Visions d'Art et Evolutions Lumineuses

Le *GRAND BIORAMA*, qui s'établit pour quelques jours, vient offrir un spectacle merveilleux à l'aide du plus perfectionné Cinématographe. Pour la première fois, paraîtront les scènes à transformations, qui ont émerveillé des milliers de visiteurs lors de leur apparition dans la grande salle des fêtes de l'Exposition de 1900.

Les féeries et contes populaires sont reproduits avec une fidélité saisissante et laisseront à nos spectateurs un souvenir des plus agréables.

Nous osons donc compter, comme partout, sur un accueil favorable.

Le Directeur, Ch. SCKRAMSON.

Musée des arts et traditions populaires.

The largest contingent of itinerant showmen, however, toured the fairgrounds of Europe, the most popular venues for entertainment, especially new and innovative kinds. In Great Britain, where hundreds of traveling fairs flourished in the countryside each week from March to October, Randall Williams, George Green, A. D. Thomas, and others quickly seized the opportunity to exhibit motion pictures. By 1900, for instance, Vanessa Toulmin writes, “nine cinematograph booths were in

attendance at Hull Fair, one of the oldest and largest … in Europe."[17] By then, fairground shows were presenting 15-minute programs of "All the Latest Life-Sized Moving Pictures," featuring chiefly British films and the special attraction of local views often shot by Mitchell & Kenyon.[18] In France, *fêtes foraines* disseminated the latest news, fashions, and "scientific wonders" throughout the provinces; there too showmen quickly realized the commercial value of motion pictures. By 1902, no *fête foraine* was without at least one or two tent cinemas, and prominent showmen had established regional circuits: Pierre Iunk around Paris, the Dulaar brothers around Lyon, and the Katorza brothers around Nantes, for example.[19] *Fêtes foraines* programs featured Méliès and Pathé films and could be longer than those in Great Britain and less frequent, evidenced by publicity for the Grand Biorama Sckramson's weekly series of shows in Limoges in December 1900.[20]

In the Netherlands, Willy and Albert Mullens set up the largest circuit of fairground shows (extending into Belgium, Germany, and France) with programs of largely Pathé films and local views, accompanied by music and lecturing.[21] The Mullen brothers were not alone in suggesting how fair calendars, improved roads, and railroads allowed fairground showmen to cross national borders easily. An important annual fair in Luxembourg, for instance, drew tent cinemas from nearby countries, especially Germany;[22] other showmen moved through fairgrounds in eastern and southern France, Austria, Switzerland, northern Italy, and the Balkans. Such border-crossing showmen also learned to adjust their programs of motion pictures and lecturing to local conditions: in the cosmopolitan city of Trieste, for instance, one showman was known as Jean, Johann, Ivan, or Giovanni Bläser, depending on his audience.[23] Throughout this early period, even in Great Britain, de Klerk writes, "high-frequency projections of short programs gave way to lengthier shows, in bigger, often elaborately embellished tents."[24]

Act III: Variety Theater Shows

Much more research has focused on variety show programs in which motion pictures quickly became accepted as one of a series of interchangeable acts. Variety shows were a relatively "modern" phenomenon, an industrialized modular format of discrete attractions (such as playlets, comic skits, magic acts, popular songs or dances, acrobatics, animal acts, stereopticon views) offered by late nineteenth-century vaudeville houses, music halls, and *cafés-concerts*. The shows depended on long-term bookings of performers who circulated through chains of theaters, often on a weekly basis, and, much like the fairs, were always on the look out for fresh talent and new acts. These fixed urban venues thus provided another established distribution network and program format ready to exploit motion pictures. In the United States, several companies created exhibition services to supply weekly changes of films, projectionists, and projectors to vaudeville circuits in major cities, including AM&B to Keith's "high-class" houses in the Northeast, George Spoor's "Kinodrome" to Orpheum houses in the Midwest, and Vitagraph to unaffiliated houses throughout the eastern half of the country and Canada.[25] In France, both *cafés-concerts* and music halls also used outside services to supply and project motion pictures to suit their lengthy programs for a specific period of time, but some entrepreneurs negotiated long-term contracts in Paris, including Georges Froissart at the Eldorado and Folies-Bergère for twelve years and Georges Petit at the Étoile-Palace for three years.[26] In Great Britain, music hall syndicates contracted with manufacturers directly to have films included in their equally lengthy programs, while itinerant showmen supplied smaller halls.[27] In northern Italy, by contrast, vaudeville theaters and caffè-concerti hosted touring companies of performers whose programs soon included motion pictures (often French) among their attractions.[28]

In North America, at least two kinds of variety show programs predominated. "High-class" vaudeville offered long weekly-changed programs of top performers in "respectable" variety acts that could attract middle-class patrons and families. Programs could include as many as fifteen acts on the Keith circuit of houses or as few as eight or nine on the Orpheum circuit.[29] Motion pictures quickly came to occupy the closing act

on such vaudeville bills, often following stereopticon views (both were projected on the same adaptable apparatus). For the most part, as in Keith houses, this closing act comprised up to half a dozen films lasting 10–15 minutes altogether and frequently meriting praise in newspaper articles and weekly managers' reports. In September 1903, for instance, the Rhode Island *Providence News* described Keith house motion pictures as "better and more popular than ever" and "of sufficient interest to keep everyone in his seat until the final picture."[30] On rare occasions, as in January 1900 at Tony Pastor's New York City vaudeville house, a longer film such as Méliès's uncredited *Cendrillon* featured as the "headliner" (supplied by Vitagraph) and then moved to the end of the bill for several weeks thereafter.[31] Similarly, in early November 1903, Keith's Providence house manager positioned Méliès's uncredited *Le royaume des fées* (*Fairyland*, 1903) prominently in the middle of the bill and described it as "certainly the most remarkable set of pictures we have ever had in the picture machine."[32] Well into the nickelodeon era, according to managers' reports, motion pictures, especially now those of Pathé, remained a popular closing attraction on Keith vaudeville programs. In December 1904 in Boston, a "melodramatic" feature, *The Strike* (Pathé, 1904), was "watched with deep interest," ending in applause.[33] In August 1905 in New York, a sports feature, *The Great Steeplechase* (Pathé, 1905), was called "the greatest racing picture … ever"; two months later, in Detroit's Temple Theatre, it was described as "beautiful, exciting, a masterpiece of moving photography."[34]

The second kind of variety show program was found in family vaudeville theaters which, as early as 1901, began to appear in mid-sized cities and amusement parks across the country. Smaller than "high-class" houses, they generally ran programs of five or six acts (using less-than-top-flight performers), usually with illustrated songs and motion pictures as the closing attractions.[35] The same exhibition services initially supplied the weekly change of films, but soon family vaudeville venues were "coining" so much money that entrepreneurs started their own local services; by 1903–4, Percival Waters in New York, Miles Brothers in San Francisco, and Eugene Cline in Chicago were opening profitable rental exchanges, forcing

the established service companies to adopt the new system of renting films as well. There probably are no better examples of these variety show programs than in the ads for family vaudeville houses in Portland, Oregon. In June 1904, the Arcade, Bijou, Lyric, and Star all listed closing acts with such names, respectively, as American Bioscope, New Life Motion Pictures, Vitascope, and Edison's Projectoscope.[36] A month later all four venues, again respectively, were often listing their featured titles as Edison films (whether duped or not): *The Picker Winning the Suburban Handicap*, *The Spanish Bull Fight*, *Love Story*, and *The Great Train Robbery*.[37] By year's end a new venue, the Grand, began to distinguish its own Grandiscope closing act from the others as "the latest Parisian film."[38]

Newspaper ads for the Bijou, which opened in Des Moines in November 1904, offered similar variety show programs of six to eight acts, often with a single Kinodrome motion picture such as *The Great Train Robbery* (Edison, 1903), *Le voyage à travers l'impossible* (*An Impossible Voyage*, Georges Méliès, 1904), or *The Moonshiner* (AM&B, 1904) as the closing attraction.[39] Other family vaudeville houses were making Pathé films the "headliners" of their shows: the People's Theatre in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, for instance, played the French *La vie et la passion de Jésus Christ* for weeks in late 1904 and early 1905, and the People's Theatre in Lowell, Massachusetts, kept *The Deserter* (Pathé 1903) for a rare second week in February 1906.[40]

Figure 18.3 Grand Theater program, Portland, Oregon, *Sunday Oregonian*, March 5, 1905.

In Europe variety show programs seem to have been closer in length and talent to "high-class" vaudeville. In France, Jean-Jacques Meusy writes, *cafés-concerts* like the Eldorado and "Kursaal" presented tightly organized programs: an orchestral overture followed by a mix of singers of often risqué songs, comics, acrobats, dancers, and, after an intermission, a one-act play.[41] According to a 1900 Paris guidebook, the clientele was distinctly male: there "you could digest your dinner, entertained by the scene, a cigar in your mouth and a glass in front of you." When introduced as a new attraction, motion pictures (from Méliès or Pathé) frequently occurred in the middle, as an interlude, or at the end. Music hall programs differed in that they offered more attractions and fewer songs, and it was at the 2,000-seat Olympia and 1,000-seat Folies-Bergère in Paris that longer Méliès films could be booked as closing acts, sometimes for months.[42] In Great Britain, music halls such as the Hippodrome and Coliseum mounted similar programs in which complementary or juxtaposing subjects, including motion pictures, were grouped together, with Méliès's longer films also sometimes appearing as exclusive attractions.[43] In Germany, music halls regularly made motion pictures the final act on their programs, and "audiences would stay especially to see the films."[44] In Belgium's music halls, performers from other countries first introduced motion pictures as one of their acts. Soon itinerant showmen, much as Shepherd did in the United States, began renting the halls during the summer months to present

motion picture programs, and their success prompted Antonio Wallenda (his hall in Liège could seat 5,000) and others to install their own projection equipment.[45] Even in cosmopolitan Istanbul, Victor Continsouza, who manufactured equipment for Pathé, supplied motion pictures for the Cirque de Péra variety shows, where they concluded each half of an evening's program.[46] Many early motion pictures reproduced music hall acts, which made them attractive for venues that could not book the performers or wished to book their acts more frequently. Moreover, some performers such as the Italian quick-change artist Leopoldo Fregoli made their own short films either to promote their appearances in advance or to incorporate the films into their stage acts, as in Fregoli's *Fregoligraph* show of transformation tricks and comic turns.[47]

Interlude: Alternative or Non-Theatrical Programs

A wide range of non-commercial organizations soon found motion pictures useful in entertainment and educational programs that either toured various venues or could be scheduled intermittently at permanent sites. As early as 1898 in Great Britain, consumer cooperatives were mixing lectures, lantern slides, and motion pictures to publicize their extensive network of factories and stores. One show, for instance, told the story of the English and Scottish Joint Co-operative Wholesale Society, concluding with films "showing the operatives at work at the great Wheatsleaf boot factory in Leicester, tea weighing by electricity at the London warehouse and various other processes."[48] In 1900, in Australia, the Salvation Army began proselytizing to audiences with a multimedia evangelical program, *Soldiers of the Cross*, which narrated the story of the early Christian Church in lectures, lantern slides, music, and fiction films.[49] In many other countries, churches were not afraid to screen motion pictures: in France, the Catholic Maison de la Bonne Presse rented projectors and selected motion picture programs as "teaching aids" in diocese schools and as "illuminated sermons"; in Great

Britain and the United States, some church leaders sought to reverse declining attendance by showing motion pictures after Sunday evening religious services or even using them to "illustrate" sermons.[50] Also in Great Britain and the United States, respectively, Charles Urban and George Kleine published educational catalogues for schools, hospitals, and other organizations to promote motion picture programs of their own.[51] In Switzerland, a Jesuit priest, Joseph Joye, amassed a collection of more than a thousand pre-World War I short films, fiction and non-fiction, that he used for teaching both children and adults.[52] In Chicago, in the summer of 1907, Jane Addams briefly turned a hall in Hull House, her model social settlement, into a nickelodeon that showed "domestic scenes, moral dramas, fairy tales, and foreign scenes" to neighborhood immigrant children.[53] In several European countries, labor unions and other left-wing organizations presented motion picture programs in their halls; for three months in late 1913 Dutch socialists in Amsterdam even operated their own Roode Bioscoop (Red Cinema), with a lecturer often interpreting any fiction film.[54] In the United States, there were fewer attempts to establish "worker" cinemas; probably the most important was the Socialist Movie Theater in downtown Los Angeles which, beginning in 1911, mounted daily programs of pro-labor fiction films and locally produced newsreels.[55]

Act IV: Nickelodeon and Other Permanent-Venue Programs

It is commonly said that, as an alternative to variety theaters (many of which had motion picture acts well into the 1910s), permanent theaters devoted more or less exclusively to motion pictures emerged around 1905–6 with the sudden rise of nickelodeons in the United States and Canada. Actually, nickelodeons represent the culmination of numerous commercial attempts by entrepreneurs to present autonomous programs in fixed venues.[56] One can find evidence of short-lived efforts in many countries, but perhaps the earliest permanent cinema that had a sustained existence

was the Cinématographe Lumière in Paris (at the Porte Saint-Martin) which, in 1901, became Le Sélect, with afternoon and evening screenings of some twenty weekly-changed films.[57] In 1900, the Dufayel department store on the northern edge of Paris turned one of its rooms into a theater, chiefly for children, with hour-long afternoon programs of Méliès and Pathé films.[58] That same year, permanent cinemas also appeared in South America: in Buenos Aires, a photographic supply store, for instance, opened the Salón Nacional and soon faced competition from a Belgian immigrant, Enrique Lepage; in Rio de Janeiro, an Italian immigrant, Paschoal Segreto, opened the first of several cinemas that thrived in areas of the city marked by urban renewal projects.[59] In 1901, in Finland, once a film distribution office could regularly supply European films, the first of several cinemas, the Kinematograf International, opened in Helsinki. In 1902, both Siegmund Lubin, in Philadelphia, and T. L. Tally, in Los Angeles, established profitable picture shows.[60] By 1903–4, permanent cinemas were opening in many countries: there was the Denki-kan in Tokyo, the Théâtre Cinématographe at the Porte Saint-Denis (near Le Sélect) in Paris, the 158-seat Kosmorama in Copenhagen, Blanch's (a former variety theater) in Stockholm, the Salão Ideal in Lisbon, and the first of several in Rome.[61] A year later a Japanese entrepreneur, Watanabe Tomoyori, opened a small permanent cinema in Bangkok.[62] By 1906, cinemas also could be found in Montreal, Mexico City, Havana, Cairo, Istanbul, Shanghai, and Hong Kong.

In North America, the nickelodeons that "boomed the business" were crucial to constituting cinema as a sustainable mass entertainment and, in turn, the US motion picture industry.[63] Most were relatively small storefronts because of building codes, safety regulations, and licensing fees, but some that could afford the expense were as large as legitimate theaters and vaudeville houses.[64] What distinguished all of them, however, was a relatively standardized program, partly derived from the modular variety format of family vaudeville, which offered drop-in customers continuous shows of short, discrete, repeatable acts, pairing motion pictures with illustrated songs or, less frequently, "cheap" stage performances. The length

and number of programs depended on the location and clientele: some ran for no more than fifteen to twenty minutes, with forty or more shows a day; others ran for close to an hour, with far fewer shows. The programs also depended on the supply of motion pictures (principally Pathé subjects through 1908) from an equally growing number of rental exchanges: although many nickelodeons were able to screen new or different films daily, the majority changed their programs from one to three times a week. The nickelodeons that opened in Des Moines in the spring and summer of 1907 provide examples of several specific formats. For 10 cents the Colonial presented 30–40-minute programs of four to five titled film subjects, changed twice a week, with no mention in their ads of illustrated songs.[65] For the same price, Dreamland offered "sixty minutes of high-class moving pictures," also changed twice a week, and occasionally included an illustrated song.[66] For 5 cents, however, the Radium had 15–20-minute programs, changed three times a week, and headlined its illustrated song and local singer more often than its two or three titled film subjects.[67] Two years later, variations on these program formats also characterized the permanent cinemas in downtown St. Louis: the Bijou Dream presented at least half a dozen titled film subjects (labeled by genre and sometimes brand), changed three times a week; the Grand Central screened five or six film subjects (with similar labels), plus an illustrated song, changed twice a week; and the Casino showed no more than four titled film subjects, changed two or three times a week, with its own orchestra backing a song illustrator.[68]

In Europe, by contrast, permanent cinema programs tended to last longer and be less frequent, following the formats of the *fêtes foraines* (some of whose showmen became theater owners) or music halls. In Paris, for instance, the Théâtre Cinématographique initially advertised weekly-changed programs of two half-hour parts, the first comprising five or six short fiction and non-fiction films and the second a longer film followed by a comedy.[69] Opening in 1906–7, the Omnia-Pathé showed at least a dozen films in continuous three-hour programs on weekday afternoons and evenings, but only half that number on weekends.[70] By 1908, the Artistic and the Cirque d'hiver (both also affiliated with Pathé) screened up to

fifteen films, changed weekly, in 2–3-hour evening programs, with added matinees (for children) on Thursdays and Sundays.[71] The films were a heterogeneous mix of actualities, news films, travel films, trick films, melodramas, and comedies. A year later, in Limoges, the Artistic Cinéma, managed by Charles Le Fraper, presented similar evening programs of a dozen films, changed weekly, but in two parts, each introduced by piano music and internally divided by interludes.[72] Here the motion pictures were arranged in pairs of dramas and comedies, *féeries* (fairy-play films) and comedies, or comedies and travel films. In Great Britain, where purpose-built cinemas initially were not much larger than nickelodeons, relatively lengthy programs that ran continuously throughout the afternoon and evening seem to have been the norm.[73] In April 1909, for instance, the Prudential Hall in South Shields presented a weekly program of nine French and British film subjects (fiction and non-fiction) that lasted close to an hour and a half.[74] In Germany, where purpose-built cinemas also were at first little more than nickelodeons, weekly-changed programs of motion pictures (chiefly from Pathé) ran anywhere from ninety minutes to two or three hours.[75] In Istanbul, where cinemas began to appear after 1907, their programs consisted of three parts, with each part made up of five or six films of various kinds, from dramas and comedies to actualities and nature films.[76] In Beirut, by 1911, the Cinéma Pathé was offering 90-minute programs of six or seven of its own films (fiction and non-fiction), with posters that translated the film titles into Arabic.[77]

Figure 18.4 Radium Theater program, Des Moines, Iowa, *Des Moines Leader*, May 29, 1907.

In the United States, nickelodeons may have established an "initial culture … of moving pictures," but their programming helped to create what some moral reformers hailed as "a new social force," a "neighborhood institution" for families.[78] They often operated like community centers where, for a price, people could congregate, talk back to whatever was on the screen, and participate in the shows. Illustrated songs in particular "localized" this new cheap amusement and its emphasis on the space of live performance. They depended on local performers, from vocalists and pianists to audiences willing to engage in "sing-alongs" – the chorus of a song (often nostalgic rather than risqué, as they were in *cafés-concerts*) was printed on the last of twelve to sixteen inexpensive yet beautifully colored song slides.[79] Exhibitors also could choose their illustrated songs either to complement the motion pictures or, when French, to counterpoint them. In the small town of Ottumwa, Iowa, the nickelodeon offered a striking example of each. A program in late August 1907 combined Edison's film version of the Irish melodrama *Kathleen Mavourneen* with the nostalgic ballad "Farewell My Annabelle."[80] Another in early November 1907, by contrast, countered Pathé's *Amour d'esclave* (*A Slave's Love*, 1907) (two lovers commit suicide in ancient Greece) and *Un jour de paye* (*Pay Day*, 1906) (a worker wanders drunkenly around a Paris neighborhood) with the

“The Good Old USA,” the “greatest patriotic song ever written.”[81] Illustrated songs were a distinctly American program phenomenon, but *Tonbilder* or short sound films (most of them from Oskar Messter) were equally prominent on permanent cinema programs in Germany. Produced and projected using a synchronous sound system that involved a gramophone, *Tonbilder* allowed popular singers of the Berlin operas, operettas, and music halls to perform beyond their usual venues. More importantly, they too, with their “clear German accents,” could foster a degree of national identity on programs otherwise dominated by French film subjects, largely from Pathé.[82]

Figure 18.5 Théâtre Fleur program, Beirut, December 1912, *Moving Picture World* 15, no. 5 (February 1, 1913).

CINÉMA Pathé
LE ROI DES CINEMATOGRAPHES
THEATRE FLEUR DE SYRIE
PROGRAMME
Du Vendredi 28 Nov. au Dimanche 1 Déc. 1912
LES CASCADES D'ELFKARLEO A SUÈDE
Charmante vue naturelle
LA CONTREBASSE DE KONESKOFF
Scène comique d'après A. P. Tschehoff
UNE AFFAIRE MYSTÉRIEUSE
Très émouvant film d'art dramatique américain policier
Mlle. Napierkowska de l'Opéra dans :
LES MARTYRS DE LA VIE
Scène de la vie cruelle
Emouvant drame en 2 parties Terrifiant (Voir détails)
FAFARIFLA
OU LE FIFRE MAGIQUE
Charmante féérie coloriée de Mr. Gaston Velle
PATHÉ JOURNAL
Actualités & Informations
Les conquêtes de Rigadin
Fou-rire par Prince
سينما باتيه
مرسح زاهرة سور :
برو غرام
الجمعة ٢٩ ت ٢ الى الاحد ١ ك ١ ١٩١٢
شلالات الكارليو في أسوج
منظر حقيقي واصلي
عا. كونسكف — فصل مضحك
حادثة مخيفة — حادثة حزينة امريكية اكشاف البوليس السرى
مدموازل نايورسكا — تمثل دور مهم في رواية شهداء الحياة حادثة مفجعة تمثل الشقاء ذات فصلين
البوق السحرى — مشاهد لطيفة وسحرية
جورنال باتيه ٥ مناظر واخبار شتى
فتوحات ريكادان — فصل مضحك يمثله برنس

In most countries during the “nickelodeon era” other forms of sound could be integrated into motion picture programs to accentuate the sense of a live performance. Some performers of instrumental music became attractions in their own right, as did the pianist for a New York theater in Jewish East Harlem, Felix Simon, who delighted audiences “with his splendid straight and trick playing.”[83] Others sought to perform music that harmonized with the pictures, as did the pianist for Harry Altman’s theater in Jewish Harlem, Arthur Barrow, who played variations on classical melodies for French films to suggest “a strong atmosphere of foreign life.”[84] Lecturers were especially common in countries whose programs consisted primarily of foreign films because they could not only explain the

motion pictures but also “localize” their reception. In Quebec, for instance, lecturers such as Alexander Silvio or Joseph Dumais used the Québécois vernacular to comment on and put a counter spin on the American film stories that dominated the cinemas.[85] In Spain, a popular lecturer such as Juan del Cid acted as a mediator, explaining all kinds of films, even Spanish ones, using his local Cádiz dialect. He made “unfamiliar circumstances or places understood … through the use of typical Spanish elements such as sayings or jokes” and even renamed characters and relocated places for easier comprehension or comic effect.[86] In Japan, lecturers called *benshi* initially summarized programs of short films (usually foreign) for audiences before the shows, but soon began narrating them during projection. For decades single *benshi* continued to narrate foreign films, and some like Tokugawa Musei became famous enough to feature as the main attraction on permanent cinema programs. By contrast, for early Japanese fiction films, seven or eight *benshi* sat in front of the screen and spoke the dialogue of different characters, accompanied by Japanese musical instruments.[87] A similar phenomenon, “talker pictures,” was briefly in fashion in the United States, with touring troupes of live performers speaking character dialogue from behind the screen.[88]

Act V: Multiple-Reel and Feature Film Programming

A fourth kind of motion picture programming emerged in the early 1910s, as cinemas began to accommodate multiple-reel films and some, especially in Europe, initiated programs of feature-length films as a more or less exclusive attraction.[89] Until 1911, in the United States, nearly all motion picture venues adhered to the variety program format of frequently changed short films supplied according to a regular schedule by either the General Film Company or the Sales Company.[90] This was even the case as an ever-greater number of large, well-furnished cinemas, similar to legitimate theaters, began to compete with nickelodeons. In downtown St. Louis, well

into 1910, the Grand Central and Casino continued to promote hour-long programs of no more than three to four General Film titles with illustrated songs, while the new Vandora (1,000 seats) screened even shorter programs of just several "Independent" films as well as illustrated songs.[91] This format began to shift with the introduction of multiple-reel films in 1911–12 from General Film and Sales. S. L. "Roxy" Rothapfel's 1,700-seat Lyric theater in Minneapolis was one of the earliest to showcase multiple-reel films, beginning with General Films' release of two- and three-reel specials in fall 1911.[92] In continuous afternoon and evening programs, heightened by special orchestral and choral music, Rothapfel presented three-day runs of Selig's 1911 *Two Orphans* (early October), Kalem's 1911 *Colleen Bawn* (late October), Kalem's 1911 *Arrah-un-pogue* (early December), and Selig's 1912 *Cinderella* (early January).[93] Soon cinemas aligned with the Sales Company also were making special attractions of "Independent" multiple-reel films, especially Bison-101's two-reel Indian pictures. In Cleveland in early March 1912, *War on the Plains* (1912) featured at the downtown Mall; later that month, in Toledo, *The Deserter* was the main attraction at the downtown Colonial (1,000 seats); in April in Des Moines, *Blazing the Trail* (1912) received unusual promotion at the downtown Family Theatre (also 1,000 seats).[94] By late 1912 or early 1913, nearly every cinema contracted with General Film or one of the companies, Universal and Mutual, that emerged from the break up of Sales, had, along with their shorts (a melodrama, comedy, newsreel, industrial, or travel film), a two- or three-reel fiction film as the principal attraction on their variety programs. A typical example was the Star Theater's early 1913 program headlining Kay-Bee's two-reel Civil War drama, *The Dead Pays* (1912).[95]

The shift to programs organized around feature-length films first occurred in Europe in 1910–11. The initial impetus may have come from the stunning continental success of Danish "erotic melodramas" such as the three-reel *Den hvide Slavehandel* (*The White Slave Trade*) and *Afgrunden* (*The Abyss*) (both Nordisk, 1910), the latter starring Asta Nielsen; more crucial, however, was the *Monopolfilm* distribution system firmly established in Germany by 1911, which guaranteed an exhibitor the

privilege of screening a specific film for a specific period of time within a specific geographical region.[96] This system spurred German film production, the construction of larger, more elegant cinemas, and lengthy programs of one or two feature films accompanied by a weekly newsreel and one or two other short films. A similar phenomenon emerged in Italy with the introduction of graduated rental rights defined according to zones of exhibition, which favored the new luxury cinemas (seating 1,000–1,500) and their programs of feature-length films, particularly Italian historical epics such as Milano's five-reel *Inferno* (*Dante's Inferno*, 1911), Cines' four-reel *"La Gerusalemme liberata"* (*The Crusaders*, 1911), Ambrosio's six-reel *Satana ovvero il dramma dell'umanità* (*Satan*, 1912), and Cines' eight-reel *Quo Vadis?* (1913).[97] In Denmark itself, the Palads-Teatret, which opened in Copenhagen in 1912, established a regular program of one lengthy show per evening, with an intermission "either between the shorts and the feature or during the latter."[98] In Great Britain, the shift from continuous shows of short programs came even later; only by 1914, with the construction of larger cinemas, did "three-hour programs" develop, "incorporating longer films, presented only twice a day."[99] Similarly in Russia, only "after the astonishing success of Thiemann & Reinhardt's 5,000-meter blockbuster, *Klyuchi shchastya* (*The Key to Happiness*), in 1913," was the hour-long program of five films "gradually abandoned in favor of one full-length contemporary melodrama, accompanied by a couple of short films."[100] By 1912 in France, to be even more specific, programs could vary according to the nature and location of the cinema. Several inexpensive Paris boulevard cinemas such as the Pathé-Journal, for instance, specialized in the company's weekly newsreels in programs averaging a half-hour in length.[101]

The 5,000-seat Gaumont-Palace, by contrast, offered each week a different program of three roughly hour-long segments (with 15-minute intermissions) totaling more than a dozen films (fiction and non-fiction), including at least one feature, a *phonoscène* (short musical number) or *film parlant* (talking film), and a newsreel.[102] Pathé's Tivoli-Cinéma presented similar programs of three lengthy segments, divided by orchestral

intermissions, with a feature (usually French) and a comedy serving to climax the show.[103] Many cinemas in Paris, however, scheduled two-hour programs (also changed weekly) of half a dozen films, with perhaps one intermission, and new luxury cinemas such as Gaumont's Electric-Palace and the Pathé-Palace even maintained the standard practice of continuous shows, from early afternoon to midnight.[104] In rare cases, a single cinema could showcase an exclusive screening: in early 1912, for instance, the Cinéma de Paris had the unique privilege of showing *Inferno* for several weeks; in 1913, the Gaumont-Palace premiered a good number of features, from *Quo Vadis?* to the company's own *L'Agonie de Byzance* (*Fall of Constantinople*, 1913), both with special musical scores that involved the huge cinema's large orchestra and chorus.[105]

In the United States, the shift was more gradual. Here, the impetus came from a foreign import, *Inferno,* distributed from September 1911 by a new company, Monopol. With this Italian epic, Monopol devised a "roadshow" strategy for exclusive engagements that could last several weeks in legitimate theaters such as the Shubert houses in Chicago, Montreal, St. Louis, Brooklyn, and Washington.[106] But it also devised a parallel "state rights" strategy that booked the film in major downtown cinemas such as the Mall in Cleveland, the Colonial in Rochester, the Mazda in Minneapolis, and the Colonial in Des Moines.[107] Other lengthy imports soon followed that year – from *La Gerusalemme liberata* and the Danish three-reel sensational melodrama *Ved Fængslets Port* (*Temptations of a Great City*, Nordisk, 1911) to Éclair's three-reel crime thriller, *Zigomar* (1911).[108] Their success prompted the appearance of multiple-reel American films on variety programs supplied by General Film and Sales, but the impact throughout 1912–13 of Famous Players' four-reel *Queen Elizabeth*, (1912), *Satana*, and finally *Quo Vadis?* was far greater.[109] *Queen Elizabeth* spurred the independent production of the first American feature, Helen Gardner's five-reel *Cleopatra* (1912), which was exhibited for more than a year in special "roadshow" and "state rights" engagements: two weeks at the Duchess in Cleveland and three days at Gordon's New Palace cinema in Rochester, for example.[110] Probably prompted by the

continued circulation of Pathé's *La vie et la passion de Jésus Christ*, Kalem made an American "Passion Play," *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912), which, although less successful, did feature twice at the Lyric in Minneapolis, framed by special stage settings, an augmented orchestra, and a chorus.[111] In the fall of 1913, following the release of *Satana* and *Quo Vadis?*, two companies sought to standardize feature film programs. Initially a distributor of independent sensational melodramas, Warner Features inaugurated a "weekly service of three incomparable three- and four-reel features."[112] Every two days, the Bijou in Pawtucket and the Fitzhugh in Rochester, for instance, screened at least one Warner feature, supplemented with shorts whose total length was equal to the feature.[113] Famous Players was even more successful, releasing at least one five-reel feature per week, partly because so many starred Mary Pickford, beginning with *In the Bishop's Carriage* (1913).[114] By the end of September 1913, Famous Players features were exclusive attractions in flagship cinemas across the country, such as Gordon's in Rochester, the Knickerbocker in Cleveland, the Lyric in Minneapolis, and Tally's Broadway in Los Angeles.[115]

Figure 18.6 Cinéma-Théâtre-St-Antoine program, Paris, August 16–22, 1912.

CINEMA-THEATRE-St-ANTOINE

39, Rue de Citeaux, 39 (près le Faubourg St-Antoine)

TOUS les SOIRS Une Seule Grande Représentation
Les Dimanches et Fêtes MATINÉE à 3 heures
Les Jeudis MATINÉE ENFANTINE à 2 h. 1/2

PROGRAMME du Vendredi 16 au Jeudi 22 Août 1912

PREMIÈRE PARTIE

Orchestre

PATHÉ-JOURNAL (A)
9 Vues d'Actualités

Le Paravent de Cagliostro
Scène à trucs en couleurs

FILM D'AUTEURS

MILORD L'ARSOUILLE
Episode des troubles de Paris (Juillet 1830)
Dramatique

MAX LINDER dans
Max, Cocher de Fiacre
Scène hilarante

DEUXIÈME PARTIE

Orchestre

PATHÉ-JOURNAL (B)
A Colombes, la Réunion Internationale Olympique a remporté un très vif succès.

L'HONNEUR DU BOHÉMIEN
Drame en couleurs

SENSATIONNEL

L'ALCOOL FUNESTE
Scène dramatique et réaliste

BOUCOT dans
Madame se venge
Scène comique

Le piano sera tenu par M. HÉBRARD. — Conférencier : M. MIKEL

ENTRÉE : 0,50 — PLACES RÉSERVÉES : 0,75
DEMI-PLACE pour les Enfants au-dessous de 8 ans
SUR DEMANDE, la DIRECTION accorde des Cartes d'Abonnement

La Direction se réserve le droit de modifier le Programme

Imprimerie Louchet, Picard, de Cooman et Cie, 17, passage Kuszner, Paris

Bonsoir or Good Night

What principles may be generalized from this survey of programming changes during the period of early film? Whatever the context, with "the *emergence* of an initial culture of moving pictures" and "the *constitution* of

an established media institution," the organization of programming elements chiefly served to regulate audience involvement. As programs became more or less standardized, whether in variety shows, fairground tent cinemas, or nickelodeons or other permanent cinemas, the sequencing principles could be relatively inflexible, with the position of individual motion pictures determined by the strategies governing a program's entire line up of acts or its overall structure. Those strategies, writes de Klerk, could include "variation (of mood, of subject, particularly the alternation of familiar or local with novel or exotic scenes), separation (of mood, of subject, particularly in terms of a hierarchy of taste), and build up (crescendoing or delaying in terms of spectacle or notoriety, descending in terms of newsworthiness, or both in terms of length)."[116] Given a mixture of functional and content relations, de Klerk adds, "measures to either prevent or encourage the creation of links between successive films were crucial"; in early programs of motion pictures or short nickelodeon programs, such measures could "be seen as the exhibitors' equivalent of editing."[117] Yet there were always contingencies, from speeding up projection, cutting shots and/or intertitles, or even dropping a scheduled film altogether to variations in a specific film's starting time within continuous shows. Indeed, continuous shows that allowed moviegoers to enter and leave whenever they chose could affect the sequence of films or even what kind of program they encountered. The gradual institution of feature-length films thus also had the effect of ever more closely synchronizing the programs that exhibitors planned and those that audiences experienced.

Notes

1 Nico de Klerk, "Program Formats," in *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (London: Routledge, 2005), 533.

2 Reprinted in Bóleslaw Matuszewski, "Une nouvelle source de l'Histoire," in *Écrits cinématographiques*, ed. Magdalena Mazaraki (1898; facsimile, Paris: AFRHC/Cinémathèque française, 2006).

3 André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, "The Neo-Institutionalisation of Cinema as a Medium," in *Visual Delights 2: Exhibition and Reception*,

eds. Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Popple (Eastleigh: John Libbey, 2005), 92–3.

4 See, for instance, Deac Rossell, “A Chronology of Cinema 1889–1896,” *Film History* 7, no. 2 (1995): 115–236.

5 Frank Gray, “The Sensation of the Century: Robert Paul and Film Exhibition in Brighton in 1896/97,” in Toulmin and Popple, *Visual Delights 2*, 223–4.

6 Much of the information for this paragraph, unless otherwise cited, comes from various entries in Abel, *Encyclopedia*.

7 Deac Rossell, “A Slippery Job: Travelling Exhibitors in Early Cinema,” in *Visual Delights*, eds. Simon Popple and Vanessa Toulmin (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000), 51.

8 Suresh Chabria, “India,” in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 318.

9 Aurelio de los Reyes, “Mexico,” in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 431.

10 Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 89.

11 Ibid., 105–6.

12 Richard Abel, *Americanizing the Movies and “Movie-Mad” Audiences, 1910–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 178.

13 See, for instance, Robertson’s two scheduled 8:00 p.m. performances at the 1899 Midland Chautauqua (outside Des Moines, Iowa) in “Programme Is Complete,” *Des Moines Leader*, May 7, 1899, 17.

14 This description appears in “L. C. Vincent the Feature,” *Des Moines Leader*, July 14, 1899, 2. The latter two films are from Georges Méliès: *Cendrillon* (1899) and probably *La lune à un mètre* (*The Moon at Close Range*, 1898).

15 Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 22.

16 Frank Gray, “Our Navy and Patriotic Entertainment in Brighton at the Start of the Boer War,” in *Early Cinema and the “National”*, eds. Richard Abel, Giorgio Bertellini, and Rob King (New Barnet: John Libbey, 2008). In Germany, the Navy League sponsored a popular show similar to *Our*

Navy that toured fairgrounds as well as music halls – see Martin Loiperdinger, "The Kaiser's Cinema: An Archaeology of Attitudes and Audiences," in *A Second Life: German Cinema's First Decades*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), 46.

17 Vanessa Toulmin, "'Within the Reach of All': Travelling Cinematograph Shows on British Fairgrounds 1896–1914," in *Travelling Cinema in Europe: Sources and Perspectives*, ed. Martin Loiperdinger (Frankfurt: Stroemfeld, 2008), 20.

18 Ibid., 27, 29.

19 Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 16, 24.

20 Jacques Deslandes and Jacques Richard, *Histoire comparée du cinéma*, vol. 1, *Du cinématographe au cinéma, 1896–1906* (Paris: Casterman, 1968), 155. See also Pierre and Jeanne Berneau, *Le spectacle cinématographique à Limoges de 1896 à 1945* (Paris: AFRHC, 1992), 33–4. In Belgium, fairground motion picture shows could run three hours – see Guido Convents, "Belgium," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 63.

21 Ansje van Beusekom and Ivo Blom, "The Netherlands," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 469–70.

22 Guido Convents, "Luxembourg, Grand Duché," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 400. See also the section of essays on Luxembourg in Loiperdinger, *Traveling Cinema*, 93–126.

23 Vanessa Toulmin, "Fairs/Fairgrounds," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 227.

24 de Klerk, "Program Formats," 533.

25 Abel, *Red Rooster Scare*, 3.

26 Jean-Jacques Meusy, "*Cafés-Concerts*," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 89.

27 Barry Anthony, "Music Hall," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 460.

28 Ivo Blom, "Italy," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 335.

29 Abel, *Red Rooster Scare*, 4.

30 Providence Clippings File, Keith-Albee Collection, Special Collections, University of Iowa Library, Iowa City, Iowa.

31 "Tony Pastor's Theatre," *New York Clipper*, January 13, 1900, 960; and January 27, 1900, 1006.

32 Managers' Reports 1, Keith-Albee Collection.

33 Managers' Reports 3, Keith-Albee Collection.

34 Managers' Reports 3 and 4, Keith-Albee Collection.

35 Roscoe Arbuckle played the Star as a song illustrator in April 1905 – see the Star ad, *The Oregonian*, April 2, 1905, 33; and April 9, 1905, 29.

36 *The Oregonian*, June 26, 1904, 19.

37 *The Oregonian*, July 31, 1904, 18. *Spanish Bull Fight* and *Love Story* were uncredited Pathé films.

38 Grand ad, *The Oregonian*, December 25, 1904, 19.

39 See "The Theaters," *Des Moines Register*, November 27, 1904, sec. 2, 6; and the Bijou ads, *Des Moines Register*, January 1, 1905, sec. 2, 3; and February 21, 1905, 6.

40 See the People's Theatre ads, *Cedar Rapids Republican*, December 18, 1904, 8; January 8, 1905, 8; and January 15, 1905, 6; and "Massachusetts," *New York Clipper*, February 10, 1906, 1303; and February 17, 1906, 1331.

41 Meusy, "*Cafés-Concerts*," 89–90.

42 Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 19.

43 Anthony, "Music Hall," 459–60.

44 Corinna Müller, "Germany: Exhibition," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 273.

45 Convents, "Belgium," 63.

46 Mustafa Özen, "Travelling Cinema in Istanbul," in Loiperdinger, *Travelling Cinema*, 49.

47 Anthony, "Music Hall," 460; Blom, "Italy," 335; and Giorgio Bertellini, "Leopoldo Fregoli," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 259.

48 *Co-operative News*, December 15, 1900, 1440 – quoted in Alan Burton, "The Emergence of an Alternative Film Culture: Film and the British Consumer Co-operative Movement before 1920," *Film History* 8, vol. 4 (1996): 450. See also Alan Burton, "'To gain the whole world and lose our soul': Visual Spectacle and the Politics of Working-class Consumption before 1914," in Toulmin and Popple, *Visual Delights*, 31.

49 Ina Bertrand, "Australia," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 50.

50 Jeffrey Klenotic, "Churches and Exhibition," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 120.

51 Luke McKernan, “Education,” in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 214; Abel, *Americanizing the Movies*, 172.

52 Roland Cosandey, “Joseph Joye,” in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 350.

53 Abel, *Red Rooster Scare*, 98.

54 Bert Hogenkamp, “Labor Movement: Europe,” in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 366–7.

55 Richard Abel, “Labor Movement: USA,” in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 369.

56 A short-lived commercial alternative to the nickelodeon was Hale’s Tours, in which motion pictures constituted one element of a simulated railroad ride. See Lauren Rabinovitz, “Hale’s Tours,” in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 293–4.

57 Jean-Jacques Meusy, *Paris-Palaces ou le temps des cinémas, 1894–1918* (Paris: CNRS, 1995), 98–9.

58 Ibid., 101.

59 Kathleen Newman, “Argentina,” 38; Ana M. López, “Brazil,” 82, and “Paschoal Segreto,” 580, in Abel, *Encyclopedia*.

60 Joseph Eckhardt, “Siegmund Lubin,” 395; and Jan Olsson, “Thomas Lincoln Tally,” 623, in Abel, *Encyclopedia*.

61 Meusy, *Paris-Palaces*, 110; Aaron Gerow, “Japan,” 344; Casper Tybjerg, “Denmark,” 172; John Fullerton, “Sweden,” 617; Guido Convents, “Portugal,” 528; and Blom, “Italy,” 335, in Abel, *Encyclopedia*.

62 Stephen Bottomore, “Thailand (Siam),” in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 625.

63 By early 1907, there were an estimated 2,500 nickelodeons in the United States. See “The Nickelodeon,” *Moving Picture World* 1, no. 9 (May 4, 1907): 140.

64 Throughout early 1908, for instance, Keith’s vaudeville houses in the New York City area became Bijou Dream cinemas. See Abel, *Red Rooster Scare*, 61.

65 See the Colonial Theater ads, *Des Moines News*, April 28, 1907, 6; and May 6, 1907, 5.

66 See the Dreamland ads, *Des Moines News*, July 26, 1907, 12; and July 28, 1907, 6. The Nickeldom, which had opened in late 1906, advertised a “fifty minute show” – see, for instance, the Nickeldom ad, *Des Moines News*, September 2, 1907, 8.

67 See The Radium ads, *Des Moines News*, June 2, 1907, 11; and June 14, 1907, 14.

68 These descriptions come from the "Moving Pictures and Vaudeville" columns in the *St. Louis Times* during the month of August 1909.

69 Meusy, *Paris-Palaces*, 110.

70 "Cinématographe," *Comoedia* (January 14, 1908): 3; and "Programmes," *Filma* 4 (June 1908): 13.

71 "Programmes," *Filma* 4 (June 1908): 13; and 5 (July 1908): 16.

72 Berneau and Berneau, *Le spectacle cinématographique*, 86, 88.

73 Nicholas Hiley, "Great Britain," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 283.

74 "Around the Shows," *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, April 15, 1909, quoted in Ian Christie and John Sedgwick, "'Fumbling Towards Some New Form of Art?': The Changing Composition of Film Programmes in Britain, 1908–1914," in *Film 1900: Technology, Perception Culture*, eds. Annemone Ligensa and Klaus Kreimeier (New Barnet: John Libbey, 2009), 154.

75 Corinna Müller, "Germany," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 274.

76 Özen, "Travelling Cinema in Istanbul," 50.

77 Viola Shafik, "Egypt and Other Arab Countries," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 217.

78 John Collier, "Cheap Amusements," *Charities and Commons*, April 11, 1908, reprinted in Abel, *Red Rooster Scare*, 73–7.

79 Richard Abel, "Nickelodeons," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 311.

80 Richard Abel, "That Most American of Attractions, the Illustrated Song," in *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, eds. Richard Abel and Rick Altman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 146.

81 See the Nickelodeon ad, *Ottumwa Courier*, November 8, 1907, reproduced in Abel and Altman, *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, 147.

82 This information on *Tonbilder* comes from Martin Loiperdinger, "Tonbilder," in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 635; and Martin Loiperdinger, "German Tonbilder of the 1900s: Advanced Technology and National Brand," in Ligensa and Kreimeier, *Film 1900*, 187–9.

83 "Moving Pictures," *New York Clipper*, March 21, 1908, 141.

84 "Music and Films," *Views and Films Index* (May 16, 1908): 4.

85 Germain Lacasse, “Canada: Quebec,” in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 102; and Germain Lacasse, “Joseph Dumais and the Language of French-Canadian Silent Cinema,” in Abel, Bertellini, and King, *Early Cinema and the “National,”* 207–14.

86 Daniel Sánchez-Salas, “Spanish Lecturers and their Relation with the National,” in Abel, Bertellini, and King, *Early Cinema and the “National,”* 201.

87 This information on the *benshi* comes from Hiroshi Komatsu, “*Benshi*,” and Gerow, “Japan,” in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 66 and 345, respectively.

88 Jeffrey Klenotic, “ ‘The Sensational Acme of Realism’: ‘Talker’ Pictures as Early Cinema Sound Practice,” in Abel and Altman, *Sounds of Early Cinema*, 156–66.

89 During the “nickelodeon era” and even into the early 1910s, the variety show program was standardized around single-reel and split-reel films, with a single reel averaging 1,000 feet. Gradually a feature came to be defined as one film (usually fiction) that ran an hour or more in length and thus comprised at least four or five 1,000-foot reels.

90 Pathé’s 1907 *Passion Play* and several boxing films were exceptions, but as the single motion picture on a program, they were “one-off” attractions. For the latter, see Dan Streible, *Fight Pictures: A History of Boxing and Early Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

91 See, for instance, “Moving Pictures and Vaudeville,” *St. Louis Times*, April 30, 1910, 21.

92 “The Lyric’s Reopening,” *Minneapolis Journal*, September 10, 1911, sec. 5, 8; James S. McQuade, “The Belasco of Motion Picture Presentation,” *Moving Picture World* 10, no. 10 (December 9, 1911): 796.

93 See the Lyric ads, *Minneapolis Tribune*, October 1, 1911, 21; and October 22, 1911, 29; and “Lyric,” *Minneapolis Tribune* December 3, 1911, 28; and January 7, 1912, 23.

94 See The Mall ad, *Cleveland Leader*, March 10, 1912, sec. S, 6; the Colonial Theater ad, *Toledo News-Bee*, March 27, 1912, 7; and the Family Theatre ad, *Des Moines News*, April 21, 1912, 6.

95 See the Star Theater ad, *Pawtucket Times*, January 4, 1913, 5.

96 Mark B. Sandberg, “Multiple-Reel/Feature Films: Europe,” 452–6; Thomas Elsaesser and Michael Wedel, “Germany: Distribution,” 272; and Müller, “Germany: Exhibition,” 274–5, in Abel, *Encyclopedia*.

97 Blom, “Italy,” 337–8.

98 Tybjerg, “Denmark,” 173. The Palads-Teatret had 2,500 seats and a 30-piece orchestra.

99 Hiley, “Great Britain,” 283.

100 Denise Youngblood, “Russia,” in Abel, *Encyclopedia*, 557.

101 Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 55; Meusy, *Paris-Palaces*, 343.

102 “Programmes des cinématographes,” *Le Cinéma* (March 1, 1912): 6; Meusy, *Paris-Palaces*, 250.

103 “Programmes des cinématographes,” *Le Cinéma* (October 25, 1912): 4.

104 “Programmes des cinématographes,” *Le Cinéma* (March 8, 1912): 6; Meusy, *Paris-Palaces*, 250.

105 “Programmes des cinématographes,” *Le Cinéma* (March 1, 1912): 6; Meusy, *Paris-Palaces*, 251, 253.

106 See the Monopol ads, *New York Dramatic Mirror* (July 19, 1911): 24 and (August 23, 1911): 22. W. Stephen Bush composed and delivered special lectures for some screenings of this film. See “‘Dante’s Inferno’ in Boston,” *Moving Picture World* 10, no. 9 (December 2, 1911): 714.

107 See the Mall ad, *Cleveland Leader*, September 17, 1911, sec. N, 4; the Colonial ad, *Rochester Herald*, November 19, 1911, 22; the Mazda ad, *Minneapolis Journal*, November 19, 1911, sec. 4, 10; and the Colonial ad, *Des Moines News*, December 6, 1911, 2. For further information on the “roadshow” and “state rights” strategies, see Abel, *Americanizing the Movies*, 23–4.

108 Abel, *Americanizing the Movies*, 24–6, 190.

109 One should not forget the five-reel *Paul J. Rainey’s African Hunt* (Jungle Film Company, 1912), which premiered for sixteen weeks at the Lyceum in New York City, beginning in April 1912; by September, following the strategy developed by Howe, five companies were touring various legitimate theaters for another six months. However, it rarely, if ever, played in cinemas devoted to motion pictures. See, for instance,

“Rainey Pictures’ Remarkable Run,” *New York Dramatic Mirror* (August 21, 1912): 25; and the William Harris ad, *New York Dramatic Mirror* (September 25, 1912): back cover.

110 See the Duchess ad, *Cleveland Leader*, December 22, 1912, sec. M, 5; the Gordon’s ad, *Rochester Herald*, March 30, 1913, 22; and Abel, *Americanizing the Movies*, 31–3. Gordon’s seated 1,500 people.

111 See Saxe’s Lyric ads, *Minneapolis Journal*, April 27, 1913, 10; and May 11, 1913, 10.

112 See “Pat Powers New Head Warner’s Features,” *Cleveland Leader*, August 10, 1913, sec. C, 4; and Abel, *Americanizing the Movies*, 36–7.

113 See the Bijou ad, *Pawtucket Times*, September 27, 1913, 7; and the Fitzhugh ad, *Rochester Herald*, November 30, 1913, 19. The Bijou seated 1,200 people.

114 See the Famous Players ad, *Moving Picture World* 17, no. 10 (September 6, 1913): 1030–1; “Mary Pickford in Town,” *Cleveland Leader*, September 14, 1913, sec. C, 4; and Abel, *Americanizing the Movies*, 37–9.

115 See Saxe’s Lyric ad, *Minneapolis Tribune*, September 7, 1913, sec. S, 9; the Knickerbocker ad, *Cleveland Leader*, September 14, 1913, sec. M, 2; the Gordon’s ad, *Rochester Herald*, September 21, 1913, 22; and Tally’s Broadway ad, *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 1913, sec. 3, 3.

116 de Klerk, “Program Formats,” 534. This final paragraph draws heavily on this encyclopedia entry.

117 Ibid.

19

“Half Real-Half Reel”

Alternation Format Stage-and-Screen Hybrids

Gwendolyn Waltz

Merely months after their introduction to the public, moving pictures entered assorted venues, including use as *entr’acte* entertainments in stage plays presented by “combination companies” that integrated variety and musical acts into their productions; projected films joined other “turns” of performance played in front of a drop or curtains while sets were changed behind.[1] By September 1896, a member in the theater company of Rosabel Morrison’s production of Theodore Kremer’s drama *Carmen* had an inspiration: a popular actuality on bills featuring Latham’s Eidoloscope projector was *Bullfight*, a ten-minute motion picture shot in Mexico[2] – why not take the *entr’acte* practice a step further and incorporate this film into the dramatic action of the play? Perhaps the earliest hybrid in the United States, *Bullfight*’s appearance in Morrison’s *Carmen* demonstrates how motion pictures were embraced immediately as a means to reshape and revitalize live performance experiences, as well as to navigate nascent intermedial relationships. Alternation between filmed and staged action is only one of a number of film-and-theater hybrid formats[3] and is familiar to film historians as the dominant structure of the Japanese *rensageki* or “chain drama.”[4] Worldwide, segments of live performance were linked together with film in alternation format hybrids. As will be demonstrated,

this “sandwiching” structure served a number of practical, dramatic, and aesthetic purposes.

The addition to Morrison’s *Carmen* – the “Bull fight Which Occurs in the Action of the Play … Reproduced by the WONDERFUL EIDOLOSCOPE”[5] – provided a highly original advertising hook to capture attention and distinguish Morrison’s production of the play from others. Additional circumstances may have influenced the theater company’s decision to use the motion picture. Assessing her poster depicting “The Kiss” from *Carmen*, Charles Musser suggests the bullfight film compensated for Morrison’s sexual restraint in the title role, in contrast to the controversial passion displayed by other actresses.[6] Yet, in January 1897 the *Omaha Bee* reported the talented “Miss Morrison … has nothing to learn” in the line of lovemaking. It does appear, however, during at least part of the tour, that Morrison’s cast delivered uneven performances.[7] Perhaps, then, *Bullfight* was compensatory, besides serving as a novel attraction “reproduced full life size” and occupying “the full capacity of the stage.”[8] Furthermore, the actual, photographed event associatively lent the stage production Hispanic authenticity and showed “every phase of this exciting scene” that was “merely referred to in the dialogue” of other *Carmen* productions.[9] For some communities, Morrison’s tour also brought rural Americans their first experience of motion pictures,[10] which forever altered small-town awareness of, and relationships to, distant countries.

Central to many of the earliest instances of stage-and-screen alternation were racing or chase scenes in which film replaced a combination of moving panorama(s) and treadmill machinery. This stage device was patented in the early 1880s by the actor Neil Burgess and introduced in the race scene of Charles Barnard’s *The County Fair*. Most subsequent “racing machines” were leased or purchased from Burgess, who was vigilant about infringements and became wealthy controlling the distribution of his invention.[11] In its simplest arrangement, horses or vehicles ran atop two or more treadmill belts that were set into open traps on the floor of the stage, positioned parallel to the proscenium opening. Behind these, a moving panorama of painted background scenery unwound from one huge vertical

roller, crossed the stage, and wound onto another motorized roller. Details could be added to increase the illusion of movement, such as fence posts or additional panoramas stepped in rows and run at different speeds to create a greater sense of parallax.[12] Motion pictures, of course, accurately recorded perspective movement; apparently, however, practicality and an appreciation of originality – rather than an aesthetic of perceptual precision – stimulated the replacement of "racing machines" with filmed-action sequences in alternation hybrids. In time, aspects of conceptual complexity, such as the documentary quality of inserted films, layered the experience of these effects. Early in 1897, *Munsey's Magazine* reported that the race in *The County Fair* had been "done by real horses per the vitascope."[13] A Boston newspaper reviewed the Castle Square Theatre stock company in what may have been the same production: "the moving pictures … showed the start and the continuation of the exciting contest, while at the end there came an instant of darkness and then, with the lights up, 'Cold Molasses' was seen as he triumphantly took the big purse."[14] *Munsey's* emphasized that the horses in the film were "real," replacing the "treadmill 'fakes' … no longer necessary." Which effect was more "real" – actual horses running on a stage treadmill or a film of horses running on location at a track – was a matter of aesthetic comparison for decades to come. Motion pictures replaced horses, while – alternatively – "racing machines" were inset as live scenes staged in the middle of motion pictures, such as in a Washington, DC presentation of Maurice Tourneur's *The Whip* in 1917 and a 1923 Providence, Rhode Island run of Arthur Rosson's *Garrison's Finish*.[15] George Pratt notes that a 1904 Bridgeport, Connecticut audience "felt cheated" by a filmed race scene in *The County Fair*.[16]

Conversely in 1901–2, several years after champion cyclist Eddie Bald ceased touring in *A Twig of Laurel*, which featured a treadmill-and-panorama effect with bicycle riders, the Owen Davis Stock Company in Rochester, NY offered its audience a "sensational" and "exciting" version of this scene: "Th[e] race will be done on the moving picture machine and will be an actual reproduction of the famous race at the Charles River park in 1890, which was won by Eddie Bald."[17] Ostensibly, this film's pseudo-documentary recreation of the celebrated race offered a stand-in experience

in the absence of a personal appearance by Bald. The film in *A Twig of Laurel* also resonated with a cinema convention: motion pictures regularly-documented episodes from sporting events. Perhaps the film, shot "on location," was perceived as authentic as – or even more so than – a treadmill contest. Economically, the film spared the stock company training its actors to cycle on rented treadmills.

Case Study: *Winchester*

Stage productions of Edward McWade's Civil War drama *Winchester* rate some of the earliest uses of the alternation format in stage-and-screen hybrid presentations, link the Edison Manufacturing Company to several versions of a motion picture scene, and may have offered D. W. Griffith his earliest direct involvement with film. Additionally, these productions offer details about practical considerations that may have led theatrical producers and directors to choose multimedia forms of presentation. A lucrative success, *Winchester* remained popular for close to a decade, was performed by stock companies, and had a New York production with return engagements and years of touring. Set in Winchester, Virginia, the play focuses on Virginia Randolph and Major Frank Kearney, a wounded Northern officer she has nursed back to health in her home in the occupied South. Frank has taught Virginia telegraphy, unintentionally enabling her to intercept Union messages and send them to her brother, a Confederate captain. Although Virginia is discovered, Frank's romantic rival (Colonel Dayton) and a Northern spy (Philip Allen) accuse Kearney of the treachery, so the innocent man is court-martialed and sentenced to be shot at dawn. Love wins over patriotism: Virginia confesses her guilt to the commanding general, then mounts her steed and rides – in what was advertised as a "race for life" – down moonlit roads with Frank's reprieve in hand, pursued by the villainous Philip Allen, whom she is forced to shoot from his horse before she can rush unimpeded to halt the firing squad in the nick of time.

Details about the premiere of the play in 1897, including its whereabouts, remain sketchy; the "race for life" may have been presented with treadmills and panorama.[18] In late April or early May of the same year, however,

Edison camera operator William Heise filmed this horseback chase outdoors with Margaret May as Virginia Randolph. A Raff and Gammon catalogue, circa 1898, provides a description of the film, approximately a minute long, entitled *The Little Reb*:

> A scene taken from the war play "Winchester," about to be placed upon the stage, in which the heroine is carrying a pardon to her lover, who is condemned to be shot. As she comes into view, mounted on a fleet horse, a soldier suddenly appears at the bend in the road and starts in pursuit of the girl. He overtakes her after they have galloped about half a mile, and as he endeavors to lift her from her horse she thrusts a revolver in his face and fires, when he falls heavily to the ground from his running horse, and the heroine, accompanied by the rider-less horse of the spy, passes out of the foreground of the picture. Both life-size. Very realistic, and sure to become very popular.[19]

Was the film originally intended for a stage production or meant to stand alone – or both? The answer is unclear. Marketed in Edison catalogues, *The Little Reb* was shown in venues where it was decontextualized from *Winchester* (see, for example, a poster advertising "Little Reb" on the undated bill of a "magniscope and phonograph combination" program).[20] Another unanswered question is why, in a newspaper description of the film, McWade's play was attributed to "Guy Fish." "Margaret M. Fish" held *The Little Reb* copyright,[21] which was granted a week after McWade received his for *Winchester*.[22] May and McWade had performed together since at least the early 1890s and married before 1908, so there may be something "fishy" about their apparent 1897 pseudonyms.[23] The couple would stage a revival of *Winchester* several years later.

Winchester's production history resumes in 1899 in Louisville, Kentucky, where the play was introduced to the repertoire of the Meffert Stock Company on Monday, January 23, 1899: "At the Temple theater to-day, the Meffert stock company produced for the first time Edward McWade's comedy drama in five acts entitled 'Winchester.' An appreciative audience gave the new play a cordial welcome. The story is laid in Virginia in 1863. The vitascope was used successfully in portraying a ride on horseback."[24]

Oscar Eagle directed the production; he also played the spy Phillip Allen splendidly and intensely in the fourth act with his wife Esther Lyon, who was cast as Virginia.[25]

In its inaugural season (1897–8), the young D. W. Griffith had joined the Meffert Company, performing as "Lawrence" or "Thomas" Griffith,[26] and he acted under Eagle's direction in Chicago with the Alhambra Theatre's summer company in 1898.[27] Beforehand, Eagle had gone ahead to Chicago to direct Lincoln J. Carter's *Chattanooga*, which opened at the Columbia Theatre on April 19. *Chattanooga* depicted the historic Civil War theft of a locomotive, an incident that would serve as the basis for Buster Keaton's *The General* (1926). Possibly the earliest hybrid production in the United States to adopt filmed scenery, *Chattanooga* also may have been the first to simulate movement in depth: in a stunning scene the speeding locomotive (a stage set-piece seen by the audience in a rear view) appeared to plummet into the moving perspective of filmed train tracks and peripherally passing scenery that were projected onto a screen at the back of the stage.[28] Since *Chattanooga* remained at the Columbia Theatre well into the summer, it is highly likely that Griffith, employed by Eagle, attended a performance. Perhaps with *Chattanooga*'s innovative hybrid format fresh in mind, Eagle returned to Louisville to incorporate film into his production of *Winchester* less than six months later. After touring with other companies, Griffith returned to Louisville in the spring of 1899, remaining with the Meffert Company through May and possibly August.[29] It is unclear whether *Winchester* was performed again during Griffith's 1899 tenure; at the very least, however, Eagle and the other company members surely discussed the production with Griffith, possibly showing him the film, as part of the group's natural "shop talk."

Figure 19.1*The Little Reb* (Edison, 1897), Box A-23 Early Motion Picture Copyrights. Courtesy of the Moving Image Section of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

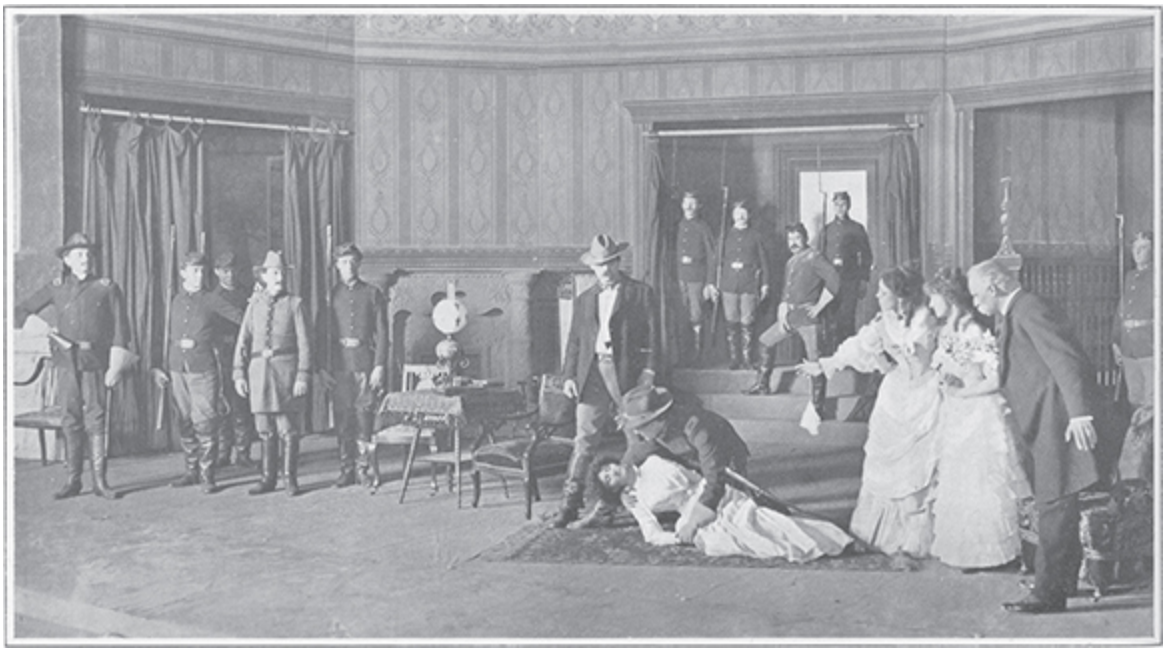
Reason enough, enthusiasm for the novelty of film combined with theater may have led Oscar Eagle to present *Winchester*'s moonlight ride via motion picture, but he also faced practical concerns. The Temple Theatre's stage dimensions are comparable to those of other playhouses where a later production of *Winchester* toured with treadmills and panorama, so presumably this machinery could have been accommodated. Yet, there were the equipment costs: unless a play was to receive a long run, the expense of shipping and renting a "racing machine" was not worthwhile. Moreover, the actors' stunt-riding abilities had to be taken into account. It took skill to

perform the chase, struggle across two horses, and – especially – stage the villain's fall from his horse once he was shot; Oscar Eagle and Esther Lyon may have lacked such talents or may have decided to avoid potential injury. Furthermore, horses would have to be trained to master the stunts and treadmills. Perhaps horses functioned more modestly in the Meffert production and were simply ridden on or off the stage from the wings (as in a later hybrid production of *Winchester*), thus supplying continuity when the "same" horse and rider appeared in the flesh before and/or after they were seen onscreen. Once Eagle made the choice to depict the chase with a motion picture, his next decision was whether to produce a new film with Meffert Company actors. Again, their skills as stunt riders may have determined the outcome, and, of course, Eagle had another option: in 1899 the "life-size," 50-foot film *The Little Reb* was available for $7.50,[30] providing a less expensive, time-consuming, and physically risky choice than an independently produced motion picture insert. If he chose to purchase *The Little Reb* from the Edison Company, Eagle merely had to select costumes, wigs, and horses for his production that looked like those in the 1897 film.

Winchester's author, Edward McWade, renewed his copyright in 1899, probably in conjunction with Eagle's production.[31] Two years later, McWade organized an ambitious new production and headed for New York. Hired to play the female lead was Margaret May, who had appeared in the 1897 film. Yet in April 1901, when they brought *Winchester* to the American Theatre, it was announced that "Miss Margaret May, a young Western actress, will appear with her jumping horse Mazeppa in sensational episodes" and that "the racing machines of Neil Burgess, used in 'The County Fair' and 'Ben Hur,' have been secured."[32] (May and McWade were already familiar with "racing machines"; they had acted in *The County Fair* in 1891.)[33] The "realism" of this effect was noted in the *New York Dramatic Mirror*,[34] and *Winchester* received predictions of success. After his contract for a twenty-week tour with the Greenwall Theatrical Circuit Company expired in February 1902,[35] McWade kept the play on the road under his own name. Initially, the tour was outfitted as "an elaborate

production, with entirely new scenery and accessories,"[36] retaining the treadmills and panorama.

Figure 19.2 *Winchester*. *Theatre Magazine*, August 1901, 17.



Increasingly, however, the machinery proved to be a problem. Early on, trouble occurred in Virginia: "Unfortunately last night the scene was ruined by an accident that frightened one of the horses, causing him to badly damage the mechanism. As a result, the heroine could not ride in this scene." The Richmond *Times* reviewer reassured prospective audiences that such "an unusual accident is not likely to happen once in hundreds of times."[37] In 1909, however, in *Munsey's Magazine* William Allen Johnston recalled that repeated accidents on the treadmills were the reason a (new) motion picture was made to portray *Winchester*'s horseback chase:

> One night Miss May sprained her ankle, and at another time painfully wounded her hand with a cartridge wad. The other actor's injuries were worse. Something must be done … some method of portrayal must be devised which would prove less dangerous, and yet would not detract too much from the realism of the popular scene.
>
> "Why not a moving-picture presentation?" suggested the playwright.
>
> "Good!" said the stage director; and the thing was planned.[38]

Of course, McWade had prior knowledge of *The Little Reb* and, probably, of the Meffert Company's alternation of filmed and live action.

On September 28, 1902 the *New York Times* reported that the "Edison company is preparing a novel electrical effect for use in this play."[39] A camera operator was hired, Johnston wrote in *Munsey's*, and the scene was filmed one morning at a country crossroads outside Orange, New Jersey. Joe Hannaway, "a well-known rough rider" who had been in the 1901 cast (possibly as stunt man for the treadmill scene), and Margaret May, "costumed as in the play, … gave the camera man a vivid exhibition of the thrilling episode. That it was faithfully enacted is proved by the fact that Hannaway was rather badly injured by his fall." The effect is then described from the subsequent vantage point of the audience:

> On the evening of the following day a moving-picture machine threw the scene upon a large white screen just behind the point where the moving platform operated and clicked off the film. Behind the scenes an effect-machine imitated the hoof-beats of galloping horses, a pistol-shot was fired, the heroine screamed, the villain groaned; and as the curtain rang down, the audience arose spontaneously and roared its applause.
>
> There was the road to Winchester – a real road, with dust spurting beneath the horses' flying feet and a frightened cow scampering over a meadow; real fences, trees, sky – and then a rider reeling in his saddle and pitching back and under his horse's heels. Action? Plenty of it, surely. Realistic? Yes, vividly so, as if the stereotyped scenery had suddenly parted and given the aroused audience a glimpse of a real world in real war-days. The innovation was a brilliant success.[40]

As in *A Twig of Laurel*, the film had a documentary effect, this time historical.

When the production played Manhattan's West End Theatre late in 1902, the critic for the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, like Johnston of *Munsey's*, was impressed by the effect's verisimilitude: "The racing machine used in the last act has been cast aside and a vitascope is now used to heighten the effect of Virginia's ride … and the death of Philip Allen. A horse is also introduced, and with the combined use of the machine and horse the

audience is treated to something out of the ordinary in attempts at stage realism."[41]

It is not entirely clear how the filmed scene fit between the staged segments. Although the treadmills could have been utilized briefly before or after the film, their elimination would have resulted in savings regarding leasing costs and rail transport. By November the "racing machine" reportedly was not used and references to Burgess and *The County Fair* were discontinued in *Winchester* publicity. Still, while the production toured, press announcements and advertising stated that two railroad cars were required to transport scenery, lighting and electrical effects, and the two thoroughbred race horses of the moonlight ride. Hannaway, the stunt rider in the film, also continued in the cast at this time.[42]

In 1904, D. W. Griffith joined a *Winchester* company in Massachusetts, portraying the officer commanding the firing squad. Appended to Russell Merritt's article "Rescued from a Perilous Nest" is a chronology of Griffith's stage career in which Merritt identifies this production as the same one, reviewed in 1902, where the rescue/chase was enacted on film. He envisions how the effect was accomplished: "while the audience watched Griffith prepare his firing squad, the theatre was suddenly plunged into darkness and a film, projected on a scrim, depicted the heroine riding furiously to save her lover. Stage lights then brightened and the actress rode out, in-person, to halt the execution."[43] This is like the 1897 transition from screen to stage in *The County Fair*. Although he is not sure whether Griffith continued the 1904 tour, Merritt has traced it through Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Philadelphia. *Winchester* was performed as late as 1910,[44] and in 1917 Edward McWade, after editing scenarios at Klever Pictures, was planning to become a moving picture producer with *Winchester* as his initial effort.[45] With respect to Griffith, apparently hybrid formats – alternation (*Winchester*) and filmed scenery (*Chattanooga*) – were among his earliest experiences of motion pictures; he later returned to film and theater combinations in his prologues and road shows for *Intolerance*, *The Fall of Babylon*, *Broken Blossoms*, and some performances of *Way Down East*. Perhaps, additionally, Virginia Randolph's filmed rescue in *Winchester*

influenced “action heroine” Jennie Baker’s ride and gunplay in Griffith’s *Swords and Hearts* (1911).[46]

From Featured Sequences to Integration

As automobiles began to replace horses as a means of transportation, trade journals published articles about actors and motoring: the qualities required of women drivers were condescendingly detailed (“brave … alert … no closer association with hysteria than an introduction through a dictionary”) and exemplified in performers like Julia Marlowe and Lillian Russell;[47] photos were reproduced of favorite players in their vehicles; and road exploits were reported, such as Wallace McCutcheon and Walter Hale’s arrest for speeding from New York to Philadelphia to attend an Army–Navy football game.[48] In film and on the stage, automobiles progressed from promenading and drive-on appearances – such as William Paley’s film *Automobile Parade* (1900) and stage productions of George Bernard Shaw’s *Man and Superman* (beginning in 1903) – to races against time – Lincoln J. Carter’s play *Bedford’s Hope* (1906) and D. W. Griffith’s motion picture *The Drive for a Life* (1909). Likewise, automobiles became the subject of hybrid effects. Georges Méliès’s *Le Raid Paris–Monte Carlo en deux heures* (*An Adventurous Automobile Trip*, 1905), a sequence satirizing Leopold II of Belgium’s passion for fast cars and distinguished record for accidents, was filmed for a sketch at the Folies-Bergère in 1905; the motion picture continued the action of the live performers who began and finished the sketch on stage, cheering the drivers once the screen was raised after the intervening film.[49] Méliès made films for other hybrids: the spectral carriage and skeletal horse of *Les quatre cents farces du diable* (*The Merry Frolics of Satan*, 1906) was among seven motion pictures for the fairy pantomime *Les pilules du diable* at the Théâtre Municipal du Châtelet in 1905; a North Pole sequence for a stage ballet at the Olympia Theatre (1906) was later edited into *À la conquête du pôle* (*The Conquest of the Pole*, 1912); and *L’éclipse du soleil en pleine lune* (*The Eclipse: Courtship*

of the Sun and Moon), the erotically charged eclipse between the "man in the sun" and the moon-goddess Diana, was prepared for *Cigale*, a 1907 revue at the Folies-Bergère. Trick photography expanded the realm of adventurous possibility. The full shots used in these films, particularly at the points where they would have joined with the live stage action, are perfectly gauged for easy projection onto the screen in an approximately life-sized scale.

Capitalizing on the motoring craze, record-holding race car drivers were introduced into the musical comedy *The Vanderbilt Cup* (1906). It was not unusual for athletes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to spend off-seasons touring a play or vaudeville piece. Boxer Jim Corbett even appeared along with his own fight film in 1897, inserted by manager–producer William Brady between acts of Charles T. Vincent's *The Naval Cadet*, in which "Gentleman" Jim starred. Barney Oldfield, "direct from the elimination trials on Long Island"[50] and joined by Eddie Bald (who, like Oldfield, had switched from cycling to auto racing), was the big-name draw for *The Vanderbilt Cup*, the first starring role for teenaged impressionist Elsie Janis.[51] The "sensation scene" was an automobile race performed with Oldfield in his Green Dragon racer on a treadmill machine with "biograph scenes for a background"[52] (i.e., filmed scenery). However, "motion photographs" also were featured in alternation format earlier in the play. Shown to the orchestral accompaniment of a "descriptive" musical number, "The Ride to the Course,"[53] the "trip of some of the characters from New York to Mineola [the Long Island racetrack] in an automobile … with a breakdown, of course" was "amusingly well done."[54] The play's moving picture effects are credited to the Kinetograph Company and the Kliegl Brothers.[55]

Photographic advertisements published in newspapers, magazines, and theater programs showed a waist-up view of Janis at the wheel in duster and goggles, her aspect suggesting an "automania" (rather than the keen-eyed steadiness of the ideal female driver) that could have driven the film's comic action to a motoring breakdown. A clipping from an unidentified magazine shows an uncropped version of the same photograph with Janis

seen from the knees up with the elongated stems of the steering wheel and gearshifts.

How should this image be deciphered? With the front of the automobile missing, the effect is more artificial and abstractly "stagey" than in the cropped views. Scenic realism served as an aesthetic anchor for the musical comedy's outlandish plot (just as detailed special effects establish the reality of science-fiction movies). To this end, the production featured fashionable cars borrowed from automobile dealerships[56]; the frontless cutaway suggestion of an auto in the photograph of Janis does not, therefore, fit into the stylistic vocabulary of the production's design. According to plot descriptions, Janis's character did not drive in the race scene. Since publicity pictured Janis at the wheel, her character must have driven at some point, and the likely scene is the filmed one. Could this publicity photo have been taken on a property-automobile designed for filming a medium shot for the comic, motion picture travel sequence?[57] If so, it would signal that not only film, but also filmic conventions were introduced to hybrid effects in their first ten years of existence, breaking with previous "life sized" projection.

Figure 19.3*The Vanderbilt Cup*. Unidentified magazine, ca. 1906. Used by permission of the Theatre Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia.

Medium shots or close-ups were apparently adopted in another filmed travel sequence: the race between automobile and locomotive in *The Honeymoon Express* (1913); newspaper descriptions suggest the musical comedy's stars (including Al Jolson) were shown at close range in the film that was interpolated between live-action stage scenes.[58] Pertinent to multimedia in general, however, is the correspondence between company manager Victor Harmon and producer J. J. Shubert regarding the technical difficulties of touring a hybrid production. Besides furthering the comedy's action, the moving picture was an ideal "front scene," masking the backstage hubbub of a major set change. Yet, unexpected problems arose. The film projector blew a fuse and had to be rewired to prevent future power failures. Balcony seats (to the Shuberts: ticket sales) were lost to

enable front-projection, since stagehands could not maneuver around a behind-the-screen projector while setting up the elaborate effects scene that followed the filmed sequence. Additionally, fire laws by this time required motion picture projection from a fireproof booth – and many theaters were not thus equipped, or else the show's bulky projector did not fit in those available – so a portable booth had to be designed for the tour.[59] Mid-twentieth century, with stricter unionization, another impediment to hybrid presentation was the prohibitive expense of a projectionist, who had to be paid a night's wages to run a film that lasted only minutes.[60]

Motion pictures also masked costume changes while furthering dramatic action, such as the raucous film in "The Suffragette Pitcher" (1913–14) – a vaudeville sketch performed by Blossom Seeley and her husband, champion Giants pitcher Rube Marquard – which showed Marquard pitching in drag for a women's baseball team managed by Seeley. In English music-hall artist Percy Honri's revue *Concordia*, a film covered a backstage quick change while purportedly revealing it as happening with the comically questionable assistance of three dressers.[61] The early cinema and magic historian Matthew Solomon describes a similar application of motion pictures by lightning-change artist Adolph Zink in his 1903 vaudeville act and wonders whether Leopoldo Fregoli did the same.[62]

Even earlier, in 1901, George Ober not only covered a backstage aging transformation with a film in his vaudeville playlet *Rip Van Winkle*, but also used the motion picture sequence to further the familiar narrative. To top off his act, Ober transitioned back from screen to stage action by employing "film to life," an interaction format effect in which a filmed character in a motion picture seemingly emerges from the screen, becoming a living character on the stage. A Vitagraph player during the last years of his life in the 1910s and a charter member of the Screen Club, Ober stood as a figure linking the Victorian stage to motion pictures, having performed early in his career with Charlotte Cushman and Edwin Forrest. Ober's Rip drew audiences to theaters and to outdoor performances in the Catskills locale of Washington Irving's story – one of which was filmed by the Edison Company (1908). Ober also made lip-synched Cameraphone films of *Rip* to Joseph Jefferson's phonograph recordings.[63]

Before this, however, the play was scaled down to a 35-minute vaudeville playlet for a cast of five[64] and then, according to company manager Willard Holcomb, Ober contacted Wallace McCutcheon (at American Mutoscope & Biograph) with the idea of "playing the mountain scene, which is all pantomime excepting Rip's part, with the Biograph film of Mr. Jefferson." Overcoming McCutcheon's initial skepticism and agreeing to "put up $50," Ober received permission to use Jefferson's 1896 *Rip Van Winkle* films.[65] A posting in the *New York Dramatic Mirror* named the four that were spliced together: "BIOGRAPH MOVING PICTURES – EXCLUSIVE, Showing Mountain Scene, Rip's Meeting with Hendrik Hudson's Crew, Rip's Toast and 20 Years' Sleep in 1½ Minutes."[66] An undated Boston newspaper described either Ober's moving picture effect of 1901 or an earlier dissolving-view version: "The second scene consists of a series of stereopticon colored pictures showing Rip's trip to the top of the Catskills, taking up the story from the time he is driven from home by his wife. Rip himself takes the place of the painted figure in the last picture and awakes to find himself twenty years older."[67] (The term "stereopticon" could refer either to a stereopticon-slide projector or to a moving picture machine.)

Most interesting in the Boston review is the fact that the pictures were colored, which – even if referring to slides – could suggest a design precedent that might have led Ober to request colored Biograph films for visual continuity with the live actors and stage settings that sandwiched them. As with commercial films, some films in hybrid productions were tinted or hand-colored, although a 1919 patent makes reference to common multimedia use of black-and-white moving pictures.[68] Alternatively, in *Rip* it is possible that a transformation from black-and-white motion pictures to the living color of Ober was made with a transitional colored slide. Frederick L. Power – Ober's stepson – designed the final effect that segued the filmed sequence back to the staged ending. As described by Holcomb:

> Fred Power … had a special transparency drop painted, with a moonlight effect on a waterfall, which served to distract the eye of the spectator for an instant while Mr. Ober, after a lightning-change from the young to the old "Rip," slipped through a vampire-cut and took his place in the same position where he had fallen asleep. The concluding

> picture was a stereopticon photograph of the Old Rip as he lay asleep and the substitution of the living actor for this life-sized likeness was one of the cleverest bits of stage illusion that I have ever seen.
>
> Although I was "manager" of the company, and knew just how and when the trick was worked, time and again I have sat in front, worrying and wondering whether George had gotten through the "quick-change" in time – for no matter how closely one watched, you could not detect the transformation, and the awakening of that picture to life was really startling.[69]

A peal of thunder and a lightning flash of stage lights emphasized this moment.[70] *The Times* of Washington, DC stated: "Realism is added to the last picture of Rip in his sleep by the living Rip emerging, it would seem, as from the fading view."[71] Still, the artifice was evident, highlighting Powers' ingenuity in blurring the division between the projection and life, between one and two dimensions. An appreciation of technology in the service of dexterous human invention was one of illusionism's delights.

Reveling even more audaciously in intermedial junctures were artists who capitalized on the alternation format for strikingly original entrances onto the stage. Georges Méliès created a film for this purpose in 1905, probably the Folies-Bergère act he remembered in a 1929 interview:

> When the show opened, the manager appeared on the stage, looking most embarrassed, and said: "Ladies and Gentlemen: I assure you, we are really very sorry, but the leading man has not arrived at the theatre as yet, and we are quite distressed at the incident. We are quite sure that he met with an accident, as until now, he has always arrived in ample time. What could have happened? Well, we shall know in a few moments, thanks to a wonderful invention – a television apparatus."
>
> The theatre lights were then extinguished. A screen was let down, and everybody could see the leading man running after a car, jump up alongside the driver, toss that hapless individual inside the car and drive it himself! Our leading man met with comical incidents in abundance, and the audience was convulsed with laughter. Finally the theatre was lighted, and the leading man, breathless and with his clothing in some

sort of disarray, burst suddenly upon the stage, singing a song about the traffic jam in Paris.[72]

Two years later, Horace Goldin made a similar entrance but, like Ober, combined alternation and interaction formats: opening a trap door in the screen, he exited (live) from the taxi cab projected there before paying the onscreen driver.[73]

Rushing-to-the-theater entrance films were featured in a number of 1910s stage revues, such as *Rund um den Alster* in Hamburg, *Eine Million* in Posen (both 1911), and Vitagraph star John Bunny's 1913 return to vaudeville: Bunny's incursion, as if from a film, was allusive as well as entertaining. Also in a 1913 entrance film, for a St. Petersburg performance Max Linder was viewed arriving – ultimately by balloon – and crashing through the theater roof while sliding down a guide-line from the basket; as the film ended, Linder – in person – entered the theater down a rope, showered by plaster and wood.[74] During the past century, inventive variations of alternation format entrance films have been adapted for personal appearances, industrial trade shows, and live television; the CBS network's talk-show host, David Letterman, includes one nearly every season.

In the 1900s, only occasionally were formats mixed or multiple motion picture segments employed in alternation hybrids, such as the series of inserts the Nederlandsche Mutoscope & Biograph Maatschappij made for the revue *De Nieuwe Prikkel* in 1899.[75] Additionally, serious dramatic material was seldom the content of film-and-theater hybrids.

In the 1910s, however, multimedia productions increased in number and, in alternation format hybrids, greater intermedial integration took place. For instance, this decade was the heyday of the Japanese *rensageki*, which incorporated a number of films in a single production. In the United States, various approaches were investigated, originating from both theater and film practitioners. One approach emphasized the personal appearance of a star, in which the projection of a film was halted so that the actor could perform a key scene for fans in person onstage – more gratifying than a curtain speech preceding the screening of a film. For example, Clara Mathes acted the death scene in *Camille* (1910), "a Pathé film starring

herself for the first two acts";[76] Thanhouser's motion picture *The Speed King* premiered in vaudeville with a surprising finish "in a highly artistic fashion as a spoken play" acted by Arthur Ashley and Harry Schenck; and with Thomas Ince's *The Alien* (1915) – a "half real-half reel, life and picture drama" which the reviewer for *Variety* claimed "undoubtedly opened a new field in the half-and-half arrangement, a field carrying unlimited possibilities"[77] – actor George Beban initiated over a decade of alternation format hybrids in which he starred. Another approach was taken by D. W. Griffith in his prologues and road shows, and by William Clune in his "cinema-theatrical entertainment" *Ramona* (1916): live dance numbers and a feature film were interwoven, providing spectacle that justified two-dollar ticket prices and drew a new class of patron to moving pictures. In *Pay-Day* (1916), motion pictures were both this hybrid's medium of expression and the parodied subject of its plot: two stage actors envision themselves performing an increasingly preposterous melodrama as they read over its screenplay and decide whether to succumb to the lure of Hollywood; filmed sequences in the stage production, complete with intertitles, depicted the imagined moving picture tale of crime, passion, and – even! – leprosy.[78] *The Battle Cry* (1914) was written specifically as a blend of stage drama and film. That same year, William Brady's multimedia staging of *Life* was criticized because the motion pictures (although interspersed throughout the hybrid) appeared tacked on, rather than integrated with the dramatic action.[79] More daring than anyone regarding the material he hybridized, in Russia, Pavel Orlenev produced Ibsen's *Brand* (1914) to full houses but critical disparagement.[80]

With the development of narrative feature films, motion pictures established a clearer artistic and structural identity. The relationships between stage and screen therefore changed. Alternation format productions and other hybrids of the 1910s (and beyond) must also be examined in contexts that did not exist in cinema's early years; in the United States these include a drastic hike in rail transport rates, changes in entertainment business practices, and financial recessions and depressions in the 1910s and 1920s. Were it not for these and other factors, it is difficult to say whether or not half real-half reel formats might have developed into a

separate type of performance medium in the United States, as in the government-subsidized political theater of Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht in Weimar Germany, or the rich tradition of multi-layered, multimedia Czech performance that continues to the present day. All this, however, is material for another historical study.

During the period of early cinema, hybrids were exploratory and served not only their producers' artistic goals of finding novel means of expression, introducing different modes of perception, and questioning and defining intermedial relationships; they also addressed theater companies' immediate practical needs. The alternation format introduced photographic realism to the context of stage settings, in the form of moving pictures, with the result that the confined, fictional world of a play became connected to the wider, actual world outside the theater; sometimes film segments supplied a documentary quality or one of "living history." Anticipating live-streaming television, entrance films simulated parallel action of purported incidents occurring outside the theater while an audience waited for a star to take the stage. Fantasy, beyond the constructs of stagecraft, was presented in motion picture inserts edited with trick effects. Dramatic action was compressed visually with film, enabling narratives to accelerate or transitions between locations to occur faster than with traditional scene changes. Moving pictures were economical substitutes for scenes that otherwise involved expensive and mechanically complex stage machinery, and were useful as "front scenes" that masked set or costume changes. Turn-about was fair play: film practitioners' experimentation with alternation hybrids showcased the live immediacy of film actors making special stage appearances in prologues or climactic scenes. Stage interpolations of music and dance in moving picture presentations increased the lavishness and sensory experience of spectacle. Whether organized for publicity purposes, to broaden film's appeal to economically advantaged spectators and increase audience demographics, or to investigate the merging and separation of multiple media in a unified artistic form, alternation hybrids captured the imaginations of filmmakers, in addition to stage artists.

Hybrid techniques never cease to be surprising. The tension of the form – neither pure theater nor pure film – gives it an unsettling power, a perpetual

freshness. Yet, in both film and theater history, hybrid performances have been treated piecemeal, isolated and disconnected, rather than examined together, thereby preventing historians from discerning patterns of production. Research into stage-and-screen hybrids is in its infancy and will require reevaluation of existing material that has been pushed to the periphery, retrieval of forgotten evidence, and analysis of confluences and influences. This chapter is but an early step in this process – primarily a sampling of the type of evidence to be found – and an invitation to the reader to join this interdisciplinary study.

Notes

1 David Mayer expertly describes combination companies and their relationship to the structure of early film in *Stagestruck Filmmaker* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2009), 31–56.

2 Dan Streible, *Fight Pictures: A History of Boxing and Early Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 46.

3 Other hybrid formats are *human accompaniment* (lecturers, singers, behind-screen performers), *motion pictures as motion pictures* (films shown in plays, in the role of films – a category conceived by X. Theodore Barber), *filmed scenery* (motion picture backdrops to live stage action), and *interaction* (live and filmed characters react to one another).

See Gwendolyn Waltz, "Projection and Performance: Early Multi-Media in the American Theatre" (PhD diss., Tufts University, 1991); and "Embracing Technology: A Primer of Early Multi-Media Performance," in *La decima musa: Il cinema e le altre arti/The Tenth Muse: Cinema and Other Arts*, eds. Laura Vichi and Leonardo Quaresima (Udine: Forum, 2001), 543–60.

4 The first Japanese hybrid (1904) featured a film of a naval battle; *rensageki* often combined alternation with other hybrid formats. See Iwamoto Kenji, "From *Rensageki* to *Kinodrama*," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 10 (1998): 1–2. In the same journal issue see also Hase Masato, "The Origins of Censorship: Police and Motion Pictures in the Taisho Period," 14–23.

5 Advertisement for *Carmen*, Sweeney and Coombs' Opera House, *Houston Daily Post*, December 6, 1896, 16.

6 Charles Musser, "A Cornucopia of Images: Comparison and Judgment across Theater, Film, and the Visual Arts during the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film, 1880–1910*, eds. Nancy Mowll Mathews and Charles Musser (Manchester: Hudson Hills Press/Williams College Museum of Art, 2005), 31.

7 "Amusements," *Omaha Daily Bee*, January 22, 1897, 5.

8 "Musical and Dramatic Notes," *Kansas City Daily Journal*, September 27, 1896, 11.

9 "Amusements," *Omaha Daily Bee*, January 20, 1897, 8.

10 Evidently, Morrison's company brought the people of Kansas their first experience of film. See Elizabeth Rosin and Dale Nimz, "Historic Theaters and Opera Houses of Kansas," *Kansas Preservation* 27, no. 2 (2005): 13. The authors mistake Kremer's play for Bizet's opera.

11 "Neil Burgess Wins His Suit," *New York Times*, December 16, 1890, 2; and Sheila M. F. Johnston, *Let's Go to the Grand! 100 Years of Entertainment at London's Grand Theatre* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History, 2001), 20.

12 See Gwendolyn Waltz, "2-D? 3-D? The Technology and Aesthetics of Dimension in Early Cinema and Turn-of-the-Century Stage Performance," *Cinema & Cie* 2 (2003): 26–38.

13 "The Stage," *Munsey's Magazine* 16, no. 4 (January 1897): 499.

14 "Castle Square Theatre: The County Fair," unidentified Boston newspaper, ca. 1897, Harvard Theatre Collection. For most alternation hybrids a screen was lowered from the flyloft. Another enterprising approach is Samuel Birnbaum's integration of traditional painted backgrounds, cut-out scenic pieces, moving panoramas, and projection screens rolled across the stage using a system of endlessly circulating chains ("Theatrical Appliance," US Patent No. 877,286 [January 21, 1908]). Birnbaum's example, a Paul Revere play, may refer to Dodson Mitchell's *Paul Revere: The Spirit of '76* (1904), an alternation format hybrid that made "novel use" of "Paley's kalatechnoscope moving picture machine in connection with the ride" ("125th Street–Paul Revere," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, April 16, 1904, 15). In 1939 a "Synchronized

Theater Production" was patented by Norman R. Greathouse to facilitate uninterrupted and repeated alternation between stage and film action with a screen that could be pulled across a theater's proscenium opening ("Synchronized Theater Production," US Patent No. 2,147,648 [February 21, 1939] and "Movies Fill Gaps in Stage Play," *Popular Science* 135, no. 2 [August 1939]: 82).

15 Vinzenz Hediger, "Putting the Spectators in a Receptive Mood," in *Limina/le soglie del film. Film's Thresholds*, eds. Veronica Innocenti and Valentina Re (Udine: Forum, 2004), 297. *The Whip* (1909) was known for its treadmill-and-panorama racing scene; see David Mayer's comparison of theater productions and films, "Changing Horses in Mid-Ocean: *The Whip* in Britain and America," in *The Edwardian Theatre*, eds. Michael Booth and Joel Kaplan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

16 George Pratt, "Early Stage and Screen: A Two-Way Street," *Cinema Journal* 14, no. 2 (1974–5): 17.

17 "At The Baker Theatre," before September 2, 1901, *A Twig of Laurel* clipping file, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. George Pratt dates performances into 1902 (Pratt, "Early Stage and Screen," 17).

18 Mayer, *Stagestruck Filmmaker*, 74.

19 Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900: An Annotated Filmography* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 303.

20 Heritage Auction Galleries, http://movieposters.ha.com/common/view_item.php?Sale_No=58072&Lot_No=52223#photo.

21 *New Orleans Picayune*, August 29, 1897, 2 in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, 302.

22 *Winchester* was copyrighted May 1, 1897 and *The Little Reb* May 8, 1897.

23 "The Actors' Society," *New York Mirror*, October 3, 1908; New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Robinson Locke Collection, envelope 1418. Margaret May began using "Margaret McWade" as her professional name in the 1910s, perhaps in connection with her role as a critic for *The Moving Picture World*. Both she and her husband enjoyed long, productive film careers.

24 "Music and the Drama," *Kansas City Journal*, January 24, 1899, 3.

25 *New York Dramatic Mirror*, February 4, 1899, 9. Eagle subsequently made his name directing Broadway plays and nearly sixty films in the 1910s. Lyon's career also intermixed theater and film.

26 Russell Merritt, "Rescued from a Perilous Nest: D. W. Griffith's Escape from Theatre into Film," *Cinema Journal* 21, no. 1 (Autumn 1981): 21.

27 Melvyn Stokes, *D. W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation; A History of "The Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 62.

28 Lincoln J. Carter, author of sensation-driven melodramas (including films) and masterful effects designer, reappears throughout the history of hybrid presentation. He also was a business partner in the Chicago-based Georges Méliès Company. For *Chattanooga*, see Gwendolyn Waltz, "Filmed Scenery on the Live Stage," *Theatre Journal* 58, no. 4 (2006): 547–73.

29 Merritt, "Perilous Nest," 22; and Mayer, *Stagestruck Filmmaker*, 67.

30 "Edison Films Catalogue," July 1901, 45; *Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1894–1908*, Thomas Edison Papers, Charles Musser, ed., microfilm reel 1. In 1896 an Edison projector cost $100 (Charles Musser, *Thomas Edison and His Kinetographic Motion Pictures* [New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995], 28).

31 McWade's connections with Eagle continued after *Winchester*; Edward's brother acted with the Meffert Company (1899–1900), and Eagle directed several films authored by Edward McWade (1910s).

32 "New Play at the American," *New-York Tribune*, April 16, 1901, 9.

33 "In the Wings," *St. Paul Daily Globe*, September 1, 1891, 4.

34 "American – *Winchester*," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, April 27, 1901, 16.

35 "Playhouse Novelties," *St. Louis Republic*, February 9, 1902, pt. 2, 8.

36 "*Winchester* at the Academy," *Times*, Richmond, Virginia, September 27, 1901, 2.

37 "*Winchester* a Great Success," *Times*, Richmond, Virginia, September 28, 1901, 23.

38 William Allen Johnston, “The Moving-Picture Show, the New Form of Drama for the Million,” *Munsey’s Magazine* 41, no. 5 (August 1909): 633.

39 “Plays and Players,” *New York Times*, September 28, 1902, 10.

40 Johnston, “Moving-Picture Show,” 633.

41 “West End – *Winchester*,” *New York Dramatic Mirror*, December 13, 1902, 16.

42 “*Winchester*,” *Daily Public Ledger*, Maysville, Kentucky, February 16, 1903, 1. Hannaway is mentioned here and in an earlier review where Edward McWade and future Biograph actor Henry Walthall also are named as cast members (“Most Successful War Play,” *Times Dispatch*, Richmond, Virginia, February 8, 1903, 7).

43 Merritt, “Perilous Nest,” 25; he also cites Robert Florey, *Hollywood d’hier et d’aujourd’hui* (Paris: Prisma, 1948), 43.

44 *Winchester* was presented at the Lois Theatre, March 13–19, 1910 (Mary Katherine Rohrer, *The History of Seattle Stock Companies from Their Beginnings to 1934* [Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1945], 69).

45 “McWade and Moore Part,” *New York Clipper*, February 28, 1917, 5.

46 *Swords and Hearts* borrowed “heavily from Civil War stage melodrama”; see David Mayer’s entry for the film in vol. 5 of Paolo Cherchi Usai, ed., *The Griffith Project* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), 110–14.

47 “The Actress in her Automobile,” *Theatre Magazine* 4, no. 40 (June 1904): 148.

48 “Stage Favorites in their Automobiles,” *Theatre Magazine* 8, no. 83 (January 1908): 7.

49 John Frazer, *Artificially Arranged Scenes: The Films of Georges Méliès* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979), 160; and Mme. Malthête-Méliès, “Mme. Malthête-Méliès presents ‘The Magic Cinema of Méliès’,” lecture and film presentations, Harvard University, 1982.

50 Program, *The Vanderbilt Cup*, Euclid Avenue Opera House, Cleveland, Ohio, week of September 24, 1906; *The Vanderbilt Cup* folder, Theatre Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia.

51 Janis became a successful stage and film performer, screenwriter, and composer. Oldfield (not a Vanderbilt Cup winner) was the first person to drive a mile a minute.

52 “Barney Oldfield Races Automobile On Stage,” *Salt Lake Herald*, January 5, 1906, 7.

53 Program, *The Vanderbilt Cup*, Euclid Avenue Opera House, Cleveland, Ohio, week of September 24, 1906.

54 Franklin Fyles, “Automobile’s Part in New York’s New Plays,” *Salt Lake Herald*, January 21, 1906, 4.

55 *The Vanderbilt Cup*, Internet Broadway Database, http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=6158. Kliegl Bros. provided motion pictures for other hybrid productions.

56 Programs, *The Vanderbilt Cup*, Euclid Avenue Opera House, Cleveland, Ohio, week of September 24, 1906; Garrick Theatre, Philadelphia, week of November 5, 1906; and unidentified [New York] theater, week of April 9, 1906; *The Vanderbilt Cup* folder, Theatre Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia.

57 Presumably, like the widely used, cropped views of this photograph, the film shot would have been framed to eliminate from view the long steering wheel column. Press-packet publicity photos often were sent uncropped, with suggestions for trimming to fit differently sized promotional advertisements. Perhaps the full-sized, knee-length view of Janis was not intended to be reproduced as is.

58 One critic commented that the “excited company in the motor car is also shown for a moment or two” (“At the Winter Garden,” *New York Tribune*, February 7, 1913, 9).

59 Correspondence, Victor Harmon and J. J. Shubert, New York late September 1913, Philadelphia October 7, 1913, Boston November 22 and 26, 1913; General Correspondence, 1910–26 (file no. 125), Shubert Collection. Robert Grau discusses the problem of supplying theaters with suitable electric current for motion picture projectors (*The Stage in the Twentieth Century* [1912; repr., New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969], 109–11). By 1912, some projectors were safeguarded with fireproofing within the machines (127).

60 Conversation with Robert Lund (magic historian and curator of the American Museum of Magic, Marshall, Michigan), September 4, 1990 and correspondence January 9, 1991.

61 *Concordia* was produced in 1903 and later revived. It is not clear when the film *Quick Change Dressing Room* was introduced, but Honri cut it from his act in 1917 (Peter Honri, *Working the Halls* [Fransborough: Saxon House, 1973], 109). Around 1902, Honri introduced an interaction hybrid act, "Oh, Mr. Moon," in which he sang onstage to his uncooperative, filmed Man in the Moon double; the film was produced by Mitchell and Kenyon (107 and 109) and is extant.

62 Matthew Solomon, "'Twenty-Five Heads under One Hat': Quick-Change in the 1890s," in *Meta-morphing: Visual Transformation and the Culture of Quick-Change*, ed. Vivian Carol Sobchack (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 18, note 9.

63 Willard Holcomb, "A Pioneer Picture Player," *Moving Picture World* 14, no. 11 (December 14, 1912): 1070.

64 "The George and Adelaide Ober Co.," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, March 30, 1901, 20. A recognized playwright, Adelaide Ober may have written the adaptation for (or with) her husband.

65 Holcomb, "Pioneer Picture Player," 1070.

66 "George and Adelaide," 20. Ober used half of Jefferson's eight 1896 films in his vaudeville act the year preceding their December 1902 copyright as a conjoined film. Might American Mutoscope & Biograph have taken Ober's lead in editing Jefferson's films together to be released as a unit, in the semblance of a narrative?

67 "Boston Music Hall: Vaudeville," unidentified Boston newspaper, undated; Harvard Theatre Collection. The Music Hall converted to a vaudeville house in 1900, so this performance may have predated Ober's 1901 use of film.

68 Frederick C. Rockwell and Wilbur M. Davis, "Art of Producing Theatrical Effects," US Patent No. 1,295,374 (February 25, 1919).

69 Holcomb, "Pioneer Picture Player," 1070. Power died before he could patent this effect.

70 "Moving Pictures in Acting Parts," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, March 20, 1901, 18.

71 “Chase’s – Polite Vaudeville,” *Times*, Washington, DC, May 12, 1901, 10.

72 R. Thoumazea and Francis Ray, “Georges Méliès, Illusionist and Forerunner in Movies: His Life and Work,” *Pour Vous* (Paris, 1929); typescript translation, Film Study Center, Museum of Modern Art. Also in 1905, Lew Dockstader and Edwin Porter made a rushing-to-the-theater film, but Charles Musser describes this motion picture as self-contained – not used as an alternation effect (Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991], 321–2).

73 Horace Goldin, *It’s Fun to Be Fooled* (London: Stanley Paul, [1937]), 253.

74 Yuri Tsivian, “Russia, 1913: Cinema in the Cultural Landscape,” in *Silent Film*, ed. Richard Abel (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 199.

75 See Ansje van Beusekom, “Dubbele salto tussen De nieuwe prikkel en De Jantjes. De hechte relatie tussen de Nederlandse revue en vroege film,” *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis* 8 (1997): 179–200; and Mark van de Tempel, “En zie ik duizendmaal vergroot.… De Nederlandsche Biograf-en Mutoscope Maatschappij en de films uit *De Nieuwe Prikkel Revue*,” *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis* 5 (1993): 21–38.

76 Abel Green and Joe Laurie, Jr., *Show Biz: From Vaude to Video* (New York: Henry Holt, 1951), 33. If Green and Laurie are mistaken and Mathes did not commission an independent film, the 1910 *Camille* may be Ugo Falena’s, produced by Film d’Arte Italiana and distributed by Pathé.

77 “The Alien,” *Variety*, June 4, 1915, 18.

78 *Pay-Day*’s film-within-a-play represented the characters’ visualization of a script, so this hybrid is more accurately categorized as alternation format, rather than that of “motion pictures as motion pictures.”

79 “Stage Plus Screen,” *New York Dramatic Mirror*, November 4, 1914, 26. *The Battle Cry* was the basis of *Her Man* (1918), directed by Ralph W. Ince, and William A. Brady Picture Plays made *Life* into a feature film (1920).

80 See Yuri Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception*, trans. Alan Bodger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 158–9.

20

Advance Newspaper Publicity for the Vitascope and the Mass Address of Cinema's Reading Public

Paul S. Moore

By the end of the early cinema period, a mass culture of moviegoing made profitable an everyday routine of constant novelty. The currency keeping moviegoing institutionalized after 1913 was constantly renewed advertising and promotion of its serial, periodical character – its program of always new newsreels and short subjects, an all-new stage show at the local picture palace, and the latest feature film of a picture personality. Routine novelty defines the mass market of consumption: products and practices circulating predictably through routes of transportation and communication. As a product and practice, cinema became a cultural partner of railways and telegraph, part of the technological grid of a newly electric world. Knowledge about cinema circulated within that grid in advance of the technology and its exhibition spaces making the experience available. Considered as a collective, movie audiences *were* the mass market, but individuals were addressed most overtly – and thus probably understood themselves as part of a mass – primarily through first being part of the readership of newspapers. Cinema's mass audience was, in fact, first constituted as a reading public. The history of early cinema has been told, alternatively, as a matter of the invention and development of its electric and optical technology; as the rise of a competitive commercial market distributing films and projectors; and, finally, as the collective experience of audiences viewing moving images. But an equally important factor at play in the creation of cinema culture is the circulation of knowledge about

cinema, chiefly in newspapers. Public knowledge binds the technological, economic, and experiential fields together. As I will demonstrate for North America, newspapers collectively addressed their reading public as a mass cinematic audience in formation, weeks and months in advance of even the first commercial exhibition of moving pictures.

The debut of cinema is, of course, also the debut of newspapers circulating knowledge about cinema. Defining cinema through its cultural construction, W. Bernard Carlson reminds us that moving picture technologies are both "artifacts and frames of meanings," manufactured and marketed in ways that telegraph their future public use.[1] Indeed, reporting about cinema to the reading public precedes its availability to the viewing public. Although the first public exhibition of Edison's Vitascope was April 23, 1896 at Koster & Bial's Music Hall in New York, the debut of knowledge about the Vitascope began three weeks earlier with news reported throughout the United States following a special press screening at the Edison laboratories in New Jersey on April 3, 1896. This news story – not the later public exhibition – signaled the commercial availability of a new technology and a new way of seeing; the advance publicity was the arrival of cinema as public discourse. Publicity, advertising, reporting, and reflection about the everyday practice and social place of cinema have appeared in newspapers daily ever since. Tracing the circulation of cinema's appearance in newspapers has long been a foundational method for local cinema history, but it has often lacked a well-defined methodology grounded in an understanding of the newspaper itself as an agent in the cultural formation and continual transformation of cinema and its publics.[2] Cinema and newspapers animated modernity in tandem; or rather, insofar as cinema animated modernity for its viewers, newspapers had already presented that framework of understanding to their readers.

The public imagined through cinema begins with the address of newspaper readers as an existing public – neither quantifiable as the amassing of individual readers, nor conceptually reducible to a mass market. Attending to this process is vital in order to understand how empirically disparate and socially diverse audiences could come to treat moviegoing as something done collectively. My point is that the audience for cinema is not an empirical question, and understanding the emergence

or invention of cinema cannot be restricted to the optical, electric apparatus and its commercial exploitation in the production of films. The study of optical technologies and projected entertainments before cinema has received understandable attention. Under the heading “pre-cinema,” we have volumes on chrono-photography, optical toys, stereopticons, panoramas, and the like, all in the interest of remembering that cinema was presented to a public well prepared and primed to receive it.[3] However, the very term “pre-cinema” perpetuates assumptions that cinema was the natural outcome and perfection of prior inventions; this was precisely how Edison’s publicity first described the Vitascope in April 1896. In fact, the idealization of screen projection was integral to publicity circulating after Edison’s unveiling of the experimental Kinetograph in 1891, the commercial exploitation of the Kinetoscope in 1894, and again with its pairing with a phonograph as the Kinetophone in 1895.[4] For at least five years before the Vitascope, Edison had repeatedly promoted and widely publicized his own pre-cinematic technologies as previews of an as-yet-unachieved ideal of screen projection.[5]

Publicity and his own celebrity was part of Edison’s apparatus – it was the part of the apparatus that people encountered before the experience itself. Indeed, Edison’s celebrity was key to the particularity of the Vitascope, since the design came from other inventors, Thomas Armat and F. C. Jenkins, and became associated with the Edison Manufacturing Company through the marketing company of Raff & Gammon. The technological aesthetic development in filmmaking and projection is painstakingly told by others, notably by Paul C. Spehr, with a focus on the pioneering figure of W. K. L. Dickson, Edison’s assistant until 1897, charged with moving picture experimentation, design, and early film production.[6] Charles Musser masterfully integrates early exhibition on the ground into his history of early cinema, which singles out the role of the early Vitascope exhibitor Edwin S. Porter, later a key filmmaker for the Edison Company.[7] Yet, these essential accounts do not dwell on the mechanics of publicity despite acknowledging that the initial predominance of Edison’s Vitascope in North America was due to the relative success and efficacy of its promotion as much as any technological, manufacturing, and

economic advantages. My focus on the detailed circulation of publicity surrounding cinema's debut is meant to supplement, not contradict, existing film histories, and thus claim publicity as a neglected but crucial part of the process of bringing cinema to the public.

Readers, Publics, Audiences

The newspaper had just taken its modern form around 1890, facilitated by cheap, vast quantities of woodpulp paper, automated printing presses, typewriting and typesetting machines, and a new professional practice of factual, objective newsgathering disseminated widely through telegraph.[8] Nonetheless, newspapers were not interchangeable. The modern newspaper was also a product of industrialization and urbanization, which exacerbated differences between metropolises, regional cities, and small towns, even as modes of communication and transportation bound them more tightly. A news market of coexisting small town weekly, regional city daily, and mass circulation metropolitan newspapers had emerged by the 1890s along with continental settlement, rail, and telegraph networks. The content of all three types of papers was sequenced and coordinated to give readers in even the most rural settled areas access to global and metropolitan happenings. With only rare exceptions, newspapers reflected the locality of each readership's place within interregional markets, altogether framed as a continental mass market. Publishers, editors, and journalists worked to craft a publication attuned to locality, but in relation to the world beyond its circulation. The coordinated marketplace for newspapers was mediated by commercial associations such as wire service membership as well as professional standards in language and judgments of newsworthiness. The particular combination of reporting and advertising characterized any specific readership as a public in relation to other publics, able to recognize themselves and their everyday life, but precisely in connection to knowledge about others and elsewhere.[9]

In the largest cities, newspapers provided content to wire services, most importantly their own correspondents' reports from New York, and from London and Paris overseas. Smaller city daily papers all across the country

subscribed to wire services primarily for such metropolitan content via New York, only occasionally providing their own content in return when it happened to be of national interest. Small town weekly papers might not have been able to afford membership in the wire associations, but a subscription to a condensed compilation of already-stereotyped boilerplate columns served their need for news from afar, forgoing timeliness. Editors also subscribed to exchange papers from nearby and afar alike, and could reproduce items using "pastepot-and-scissors," a common banner for a column of oddities culled from other sources. Only a minimal amount of news happened here and now, and all newspapers presented an edited cross-cut of events, features, and leisure reading from a variety of spaces, times, and publications. Essential to this continental network of news dispatching was the telegraph, the first electrical industry and the foundation of engineered commerce.[10] By the time the trans-Atlantic cable was operating in 1866, Western Union was also the first monopolistic industry in the United States, leading to congressional scrutiny and its redefinition as a public utility, still profit-seeking but now required to provide fair access. News wire services were a key customer for Western Union; mutual advantages hardened monopoly control in both industries. By 1879, the New York-based Associated Press (AP) thus also gained a monopoly over the provision of news wire service across the continent, obtaining the first dedicated leased wire from Western Union. The result was a proliferation of news available simultaneously across the continent, but highly centralized in its selection in New York.[11]

The New York dailies may have been fierce competitors rhetorically on their own pages and on newsstands in Manhattan, but through the AP they effectively controlled the national supply of news. "By having the nation's news 'edited' or, to use a term that legislators were more comfortable with, 'censored,' in one office … the AP was the one institution in America that was immune from scrutiny by the press."[12] In 1880, the AP served 355 of 971 daily papers in the United States, with those not paying for membership obtaining news more slowly, although cheaply, through exchange-desk subscriptions or boilerplate service.[13] The concentration in power actually led to a coup in 1892, when it became known to Midwestern newspaper

publishers that the New Yorkers had been colluding to control competition. The moniker Associated Press was usurped and headquarters moved to Chicago, forcing the powerful New York daily papers to affiliate in competition as the United Press. At first, the New Yorkers kept their dominant position, but in October 1893 Joseph Pulitzer moved the *New York World* to the AP, providing it a secure footing with a supply of items from the largest circulation newspaper on the continent. United Press finally went bankrupt in 1897, although the resulting monopoly of the AP was itself short-lived, dissolved by court order in 1900.[14] Cinema was thus introduced to the public at a rare moment of unusual competition between wire services, and during an even more rare moment when New York's business-oriented establishment newspapers (the *Herald*, *Tribune*, *Times*, and *Sun*) were relatively weak in relation to the insurgent "yellow journalism" of Joseph Pulitzer's *World* and William Randolph Hearst's *Journal*.[15] These factors will be important to keep in mind as I turn to a detailed analysis of the continental dispersal of news about cinema before its public debut in New York in April 1896.

Since at least Harold Innis, telegraphed news has been understood to be essential in laying the foundation for a modern orientation to space and time as a marketplace. Especially in North America, communications allowed rationalized but monopolistic enterprises to proliferate through what Alfred Chandler Jr. called the "visible hand" of a managerial revolution.[16] In a classic description of the telegraph as an instrument of technology and ideology, James Carey stated plainly: "The effect of the telegraph is a simple one: it evens out markets in space.… It shifts speculation from space to time, from arbitrage to futures. After the telegraph, commodity trading moved from trading between places to trading between times."[17] Carey also claimed a shift in public awareness at large, at least insofar as the relationship between the reading public and its newspaper had become a matter of cultural connection: "The origins of objectivity may be sought, therefore, in the necessity of stretching language in space over the long lines of Western Union.… The language of the telegraph displaced a fiduciary relationship between writer and reader with a coordinated one."[18] My point is not to delve into the political economy of journalism so much

as to reiterate that newspaper reading and the circulation of news is foundational to modern public practices in general, and mass marketed technologies in particular. In the years just before cinema, the experience of metropolitan modernity became available across North America to all readers of any newspaper.[19] Indeed, the pervasive circulation of newspapers allowed an indiscriminate slippage between democratic public and mass market through their common constitution as newspaper readers. As I have written elsewhere, the newspaper offered a map or menu of possibilities of experience in modernity and everyday life, defining the contours of the modern public sphere as something meaningful despite its distinction from local and personal experience.[20]

Newspaper reading as the basis of "imagined communities" is a well-known observation of Benedict Anderson, but the relation between the circulation of vernacular "print-capitalism" and modernity can be generalized beyond Anderson's overt concern with nationalism.[21] Michael Warner has thus defined "publics" as a crucial, uniquely modern social formation built around the circulation of texts. Warner defines a public as "a space of discourse" that "exists only … *by virtue of being addressed*.… There could be an infinite number of publics within the social totality. This sense of the term is completely modern; it is the only kind of public for which there is no other term. Neither 'crowd' nor 'audience' nor 'people' nor 'group' will capture the same sense. The difference shows us that the idea of a public, unlike a concrete audience or the public of any polity, is text-based."[22] The indeterminate formation of publics is the result of a "partial non-identity" with the subject being addressed, because public speech is always understood by its readers as both addressed to them directly but concurrently to strangers. Because it is possible for authorities to address a public as a unitary public, as *the* public, many aspects of Warner's conception of publics are related to more prominent theories of communicative association as the basis of democracy, most notably in Habermas.[23]

Warner insists that publics "commence with the moment of attention, must continually predicate renewed attention, and cease to exist when attention is no longer predicated. They are virtual entities, not voluntary

associations."[24] To be animated and sustained over time, then, public address must take on elements of novelty and familiarity, repetition and resonance with existing practices. "It is not texts themselves that create publics, but the concatenation of texts through time. Only when a previously existing discourse can be supposed, and a responding discourse be postulated, can a text address a public.… Anything that addresses a public is meant to undergo circulation."[25] The privilege given the nation and the democratic public is an ideological choice, then, supported especially through the prominence of orienting to public formation as if it were an empirical concern, mistaking public opinion for opinion polling in order to assert majority rule. The equivalent slippage in film history is the continual focus on the empirical question of audiences, in terms of proportions of populations or the demographic composition of audiences – as if knowing the facts would pinpoint the moment when a mass audience emerged within an institutionalized cinema culture. That problem is beside the point of the emergence of a cinematic public. Networks circulating telegraphs and newsprint had already facilitated masses of strangers to potentially understand their relationship to each other as linked by electricity and leisure. News about cinema did much more than communicate or make legitimate the social importance of film as a technology or practice. The very idea of a mass viewing public of disparate audiences was already inscribed in the logic of news reading; the success of Edison's Vitascope depended upon it.

Telegraphing Cinematic Experience: The Vitascope's Advance Publicity

The Vitascope made its debut to the public on Saturday, April 4, 1896. Let me restate this in a more accurate way: beginning April 4, 1896, newspapers across North America began reporting how, the previous evening, reporters from major New York newspapers had witnessed a

special screening of Edison's latest invention, the Vitascope.[26] Although the later Vitascope debut on April 23, 1896 at Koster & Bial's Music Hall has come to signify the start of American film history, at the time it was reported as a relatively local event and did not garner much attention outside New York. Instead, the three weeks prior were peppered with news about the Vitascope's advance press screening, published coast-to-coast in cities and small towns alike. Edison's marketing team, Raff & Gammon, relied upon a handful of New York newspapers to create nationwide publicity through their connections to news wire services. The story circulated for months, subsequently edited and reprinted for several boilerplate services. Only the three largest circulation New York morning newspapers appear to have been invited to the press screening at the Edison facilities in West Orange, New Jersey on Friday evening, April 3, 1896.[27] Reports about the Vitascope do not appear in New York's prominent business-oriented (but lower circulation) *Times*, *Sun*, or *Tribune*.[28] The only "establishment" paper to report the story was James Gordon Bennett Jr.'s *Herald*, which had long outgrown its origins as the populist "penny press" Bennett Sr. pioneered in 1835. Two other reports came from the more populist progenitors of the "new journalism": Pulitzer's *New York World* and Hearst's *New York Journal*.[29] All three printed stories on Saturday morning, April 4, 1896, although these metropolitan publications should not quite be considered authentic original reports of the event.

The Vitascope screening in New Jersey on April 3, 1896 was reported all across the United States as early as the next morning, simultaneous with its publication in New York. Even before newsboys descended upon Manhattan, the *World* had already provided its story as content to the Associated Press wire service. As wire copy, the *World* version was published in a variety of edited and paraphrased forms over the next week; it was then condensed for a boilerplate service article that circulated for months. The Vitascope story in the *Herald* was instead more likely to be reprinted through exchange desk copies of the published newspaper; used less frequently and later, the *Herald* version was more likely to be quoted in depth without editing, with the notable exception of a specially dispatched telegraph version in the *Los Angeles Times*.[30] The third Vitascope story, in

the *Journal*, is substantively distinct, idiosyncratically dwelling on the sensationalistic screened images of dancing girls rather than the technology; it seems to be used only for its original Hearst publication. Altogether, the various permutations as wire copy, boilerplate, and clippings from exchange subscriptions allowed the story of the Vitascope to appear across the United States before its "debut" at Koster & Bial's Music Hall in New York. Each successive news form stripped the story of its historical specificity, removing the date, place, and context of the press screening, but allowing the Vitascope story to continue circulating for months to successively less frequent and smaller circulation papers.

The *New York World* version of the Vitascope story was relayed across the country almost verbatim. After adding a dateline and header citing the source ("New York, April 4. – *The World* this morning says: …"), the copy editor for the Associated Press made only minor changes: three typographic and spelling errors were fixed and two particularly florid phrases were cut. Although the Associated Press was rarely credited, the source is cited at least once in New Orleans in the *Times-Picayune* ("The 'Vitascope,' Edison's Latest Invention," April 4, 1896). The more quickly newspapers printed the wire copy, the more likely editors were to leave the dateline and citation intact. This detail at the start of the item was dropped as days passed and the story lost its currency, although some editors actually changed the date to keep it recent. The length of articles cribbed from wire copy varied greatly, however, as editors cut and shortened the story to fit whatever space remained on their page. Headlines, too, differed from place to place, and seem to be entirely composed by the local editor. On April 4, 1896, the same day as its publication in the *World*, for example, two papers, in Utah and Kansas, kept the dateline, but under different headlines: "Edison Has a New Machine" in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, and "Calls it the Vitascope" in the *Hutchinson News*. Both begin with the wire copy intact:

> New York, April 4 – *The World* this morning says: Thomas A. Edison was in a very happy mood when seen by a reporter in his laboratory in West Orange last night. The great inventor had about completed another machine, which he called the 'vitascope.' It is an improvement on the kinetoscope, and Mr. Edison says he has no doubt that it will prove a success. The vitascope throws on a screen by means of bright lights and

> powerful lenses the moving life size figures of human beings and animals. Last night in the big foundry building adjacent to the laboratory the machine was rigged up and a very satisfactory exhibition was made.
>
> Only the *Hutchinson News* continued with the remainder of the wire copy:
>
> The first picture shown last night on the screen was a colored panorama of a serpentine dance by Anabelle, who posed before the kinetoscope last summer. The film roll on which the photographs were attached was arranged over a half dozen spools and pulleys and when the machine was set in motion, the dancer's image appeared upon the screen as if in life. The original photographs as taken by the kinetoscope and developed on the roll, are about the size of a special delivery postage stamp, and to produce a picture life size are magnified about 600 times. Mr. Edison expects shortly to be able to so improve the phonograph that he will be able to take records much longer than now and the vitascope and phonograph will then be so combined that it will be possible for audiences to watch a photographic reproduction of an opera and hear the music at the same time.

Other same-day versions diverge in detail from the core story as published above. In Texas, the *San Antonio Light* (April 4, 1896), near the end of a column of brevities headed "Wrenched from the Wire," printed only one sentence. Wrenched gives a good sense of the process, as either the telegrapher transcribed the name of the invention incorrectly, or someone in the newsroom used indecipherable handwriting, or perhaps the compositor simply left a typo: "Edison has a new machine the Ulascope, an improvement on the Kinetoscope." In Massachusetts, the *Boston Transcript* ("Edison's Latest is the Vitascope," April 4, 1896) significantly edited the introduction to shorten the item, rather than cutting at the end. Other newsrooms took a few days to publish the Associated Press wire story. On Sunday, April 5, 1896, versions appeared in Texas in the *Galveston News* ("Edison's Vitascope") and in Nebraska in the *Omaha Bee* ("Edison Scores a New Triumph"), both with the original dateline still intact. On Monday, April 6, in Indiana the *Fort Wayne News* ("Edison's New Invention") changed the dateline to that very same day, while in Ohio the *Marietta*

Leader (“The Vitascope”) cut the citation of the *World* as the source and in Wyoming the *Laramie Boomerang* simply paraphrased a synopsis without a headline, running the item within a column of “Telegraphic Briefs.” By the end of the week, news about the Vitascope had appeared in at least twenty US states in all regions of the country.

Under the headline “Tests His Vitascope,” a literally stereotyped version of the story began circulating widely in dozens of newspapers as boilerplate the following week. Stripped of its *New York World* dateline, the syndicated story also entirely omitted all of the context of the original press screening: the New Jersey location, the April date, that journalists were eyewitnesses – all those facts were simply cut. With details of the Who? When? and Where? removed, this version zones in entirely on the What? and Why? explanation of how the Vitascope worked. Sentences that describe the technology and experience are left intact, but the only context for this news as an event is that Edison tested it “the other night.” The currency of the event is taken out in order to maintain the value of the news item. This careful stripping away of detail was precisely the point of dateless, placeless boilerplate news; this was the service small town weekly papers needed, since it allowed a span of months to publish a story from a file clipping. The identically typeset story appeared as early as April 14, 1896 in Illinois in the *Decatur Republican*, but not until June 14 in Iowa in the *Dubuque Herald*. Later still, and this time not even meriting its own headline, a two-sentence description was part of a boilerplate point-form column collecting recent curiosities from the realm of “Science and Industry”; this appeared, for example, in Nevada in the *Reno Gazette* on July 10 and in Ohio in the *New Philadelphia Democrat* on August 6, 1896. Each reiteration and repurposing stripped away specificity but also allowed wider coverage as the story moved from regional city daily papers to small town weekly papers. In every case, however, news about the Vitascope was published locally well in advance of the local availability of the experience itself.

Changing the timeline of the event to keep the story current also happened with the more limited reprinting of the second account of the Vitascope press screening from the *New York Herald* (“Mr. Edison’s Latest,” April 4, 1896). The *Herald* article was reprinted on the same day in

Connecticut in the *Meriden Republican* (“Mr. Edison’s Latest,” April 4, 1896), and sent by special dispatch telegraph directly to the *Los Angeles Times* (“Edison’s New Invention,” April 4, 1896). Elsewhere, the story was reproduced more slowly and with less modification than the Associated Press wire story detailed above, indicating that it was cut-and-pasted from exchange subscription copies. For example, the *Omaha Bee*, which had quickly published the AP news wire story on April 5, did not reprint the *Herald* account until April 19. With the subheading “Edison’s Latest,” the item was placed within a feature story, “The Field of Electricity,” which also included items about telephone services, X-rays, and hand-held lamps. The Nebraska editor made a point of rewriting the story to say the screening had happened “one evening last week.” In the next days, the story appeared elsewhere with its own headline and the text left almost verbatim except for the timeline. In Ohio in the *Steubenville Herald* on April 21, the event was noted as happening “the other night,” whereas the *Honalulu Bulletin* on April 20 changed the phrase to read “about two weeks ago.” A few days earlier, all indication of the original date was removed when reprinted in the British colony of Newfoundland (“Mr. Edison’s Latest,” *St. John’s Telegram*, April 16, 1896).

Sharing the structure and many phrases with the story from the *New York World* and news wire, the *Herald* added further details to publish a lengthier story. A second film of an English Derby is noted, in addition to Anabelle’s serpentine dance. Names of Edison managers and Raff & Gammon are given to make clearer the publicity stunt context, whereas the *World* version lent itself to misinterpretation that Edison was experimenting in a laboratory. The *Herald* also paid closer attention to Edison’s own opinions of the new apparatus, proclaiming it to be the “perfection” of previous experiments and machines. Vibration is noted as the main failure of previous projectors. Curiously, the *Herald* reported that “Even the inventor himself was surprised at the results, although … he discovered flaws in the film which he declared must be disposed of before the vitascope would come up to his ideal.” Inadvertently, the *Herald* confirmed something we know from Raff & Gammon’s private correspondence: planned, earlier demonstrations to Edison himself had fallen through, and the Wizard only witnessed the Vitascope in person during the press screening.[31]

The amassed articles reporting about the Vitascope and its moving pictures support my claim that cinema's audience was the entire public of the United States even before the technology and its films were distributed for exhibition. This mass public could only be addressed as a newspaper reading public, through established networks for disseminating newsworthy events. As a marketing strategy, the Vitascope's promoters needed to ensure publicity was carried to everywhere exhibition rights for the apparatus were being sold across the United States and Canada. Tapping into the news network was, of course, the most efficient means of covering this vast territory, but ensuring the Vitascope was promoted as something newsworthy also tapped into the more intangible sense of the reading public as an already-existing mass audience. The subsequent experience of cinema would begin at the metropolis and take months to circulate to the periphery of the mass market. That the wide readership about Edison's latest invention derived from news of its being unveiled to the press, rather than its being shown to a New York audience, made the imagined community for cinema more inclusive of all readers everywhere. To some extent, the Vitascope's promoters understood as much.

As is well known to film historians, the Vitascope was not invented by Edison; the apparatus was a renamed Phantoscope, originally developed by C. Francis Jenkins and Thomas Armat of Washington, DC. Breaking from his partner late in 1895, Armat agreed to have the device commercialized by Raff & Gammon, the marketers of Edison's kinetoscope. After composing a contract with Armat in December 1895, Raff & Gammon proceeded quickly to negotiate rights to exhibit the "screen machine," beginning early in February 1896 before the word "vitascope" was chosen. They first invited existing Kinetoscope entrepreneurs to purchase state-based rights to exhibit the Vitascope. Seven states were already sold by the time a promotional circular was printed to promote the machine to potential investors. Although Raff & Gammon's correspondence indicates that reporters were trying to confirm rumors of Edison's new invention, keeping a lid on press coverage was key to the promotional scheme; Raff & Gammon wanted the first press reports to stem from their own successfully orchestrated event. Throughout March 1896, prospective rights-holders were assured that a press screening was soon planned that would generate

public interest and thus increase the price they could demand from latecomers seeking to sub-lease territory and apparatuses. Someone interested in rights for Wisconsin was encouraged, late in March, to make a quick decision: “Territory is being purchased rapidly, and when we permit the new machine to get into newspapers, we think all good territory will quickly be taken.”[32]

Within Charles Musser’s review of the Vitascope’s debut, there are indications that Raff & Gammon understood the existing network through which newspapers dispersed publicity across the continent. For example, Musser notes that Raff & Gammon “choreographed an abbreviated but effective promotional campaign.… From the outset, they had decided to have the premiere in New York City, the nation’s entertainment and media capital.”[33] This formulation only hints at the material (and electric-immaterial) circulation of metropolitanism connoted by the phrase “media capital.” Musser offers further confirmation that Raff & Gammon themselves knew exactly how publicity worked, citing a letter written to Armat explaining plans for exploitation: “We can do much better and make more money for both parties by exhibiting the machine at the start exclusively in New York City. The reports through the news-papers go throughout the country, and we shall do a lot of advertising in the shape of news-paper articles which will excite the curiosity of parties interested in such things.”[34] Here is the crux of the matter: an advance screening for the New York press would suffice as a national advertising campaign.

My point is not that Raff & Gammon thought advertising and news were interchangeable or that they paid for the publicity. They seem to fully understand how news was disseminated across the continent by first drawing the attention of New York journalists; this is where Edison comes in, as Terry Ramsaye duly notes in his foundational account from *A Million and One Nights*, since the “wizardly” Edison’s involvement ensured extensive media coverage.[35] On the evening of the press screening, Edison played the ascribed role of inventor. Ramsaye reprints the news story from the *New York Herald* and the account with “a shade more color” in Hearst’s *New York Journal*.[36] Musser also quotes the *Journal* and notes that the *New York World* and other dailies published stories the following day, and he

further mentions that “their reports soon appeared in newspapers nationwide.”[37] This acknowledgment of coast-to-coast publicity allows for my focus on the circulation of news with a view to understanding the rapid pace of the spread of cinema in 1896.[38] The diffusion of the apparatus from metropolis to continental mass market was the marketing plan from the start, made possible with the nearly instantaneous diffusion of knowledge to the newspaper readers who would become the audience for cinema.

Cinema’s Publicity Beyond the Vitascope

The association of cinema in North America with Edison, even more than with the Vitascope itself, was built precisely upon its continuity with his Kinetograph and Kinetoscope beforehand, now cast as imperfect experiments against the ideal manifested in 1896 in projected moving pictures. Briefly that year, the word “vitascope” could be used as metaphor for idealized representation in and of itself. For example, the *Washington Post* published a series of vividly descriptive urban vignettes under the banner “Vitascope Pictures” (from October 25, 1896, weekly through December). And again, a humorous column entitled “Like Life in a Novel” by Edgar Saltus described the gilded lifestyle of wealthy vacationers at Newport in Rhode Island as “a vitascope of what social existence might be, an approach to the ideal.” (Published, for example, in the *Lima (OH) Times-Democrat*, September 4, 1896.) Such connotations for the specific word ‘vitascope’ could not last long, as 1896 also witnessed the proliferation of variously named screen machines. Another item, under the heading “Gossip of Gotham,” poked fun at the metropolis for its obsession with novelty: “The living photograph machine craze is upon Gotham in its most virulent shape. Beginning with the vitascope, the disease ran the various stages of cinematograph, kineopticon, biograph, and centoscope, terminating finally in cinographoscope. The animatograph and theaterscope, both of which are raging in London, have not yet found their way over on steamships” (*Houston Post*, November 14, 1896). As this humorous newspaper tidbit

indicates, Edison and his promoters knew they would not have a monopoly on the technology of moving pictures for long.

Raff & Gammon faced an array of challenges in marketing, but the most urgent was the imminent invasion of competition from Europe. The problem was not solved simply by being first in the North American market; success relied on the public branding of “Edison” and “Vitascope” with the very idea of cinema. Press coverage of earlier domestic machines had been circulating in newspapers of all types in the pattern described above for almost a year already, and stories about the craze for cinema in Europe began to appear in the United States in February 1896, facilitated by the instantaneous communication allowed by the trans-Atlantic newswire. Edison’s domestic advantages could be scuttled by New York journalists’ own metropolitan pull toward Paris and London. During the very same week of the Vitascope’s advance screening, a boilerplate article appeared about the Lumière Cinématographe’s debut in London. Headlined “Beats the Kinetoscope,” the piece was originally written by the New York correspondent of the *Pittsburg Dispatch*, who wrote about attending a Kinetoscope parlor with someone recently returned from overseas. The article laments the inability of America – even New York – to keep up with the novelties of Europe: “These [Kinetoscopes] are all very well in their way, but they’re not in it with the cinematographe.… In this French development of Edison’s toy, London has the biggest attraction of the sort that it has had for years. Of course the cinematographe will astonish New York before long.” The chain of locations is remarkable here: Paris–London–New York–Pittsburgh, and then reprinted in boilerplate throughout the country, for example, in Maine in the *Lewiston Sun* on April 6, 1896. At the end of the week, it appeared within a features page of the *San Francisco Sunday Call* on April 12, under the banner “Novelties in the Realms of Science, Literature, and Art” – all before anyone in North America except a few journalists had seen the Vitascope.

Another article about the Cinématographe appeared even before the Vitascope advance screening. Originally a dispatch from the Paris correspondent of the *Philadelphia Telegraph*, the entire column is a lament about the mundane character of American life compared to Europe, “where the studious youth revel in mirth and headlong enthusiasm.” Reprinted in

the *Syracuse Standard* on March 29, 1896, it read: “There is a new show called the Cinematographe, whereunto one is admitted for the modest sum of 20 cents. There in a neat little theater one sits and contemplates a series of scenes, the latest triumph of photography.” Earlier still was an article extolling the wonders of the Theatrograph in London, running across the United States all throughout March 1896. This story began as a late-February dispatch from the London correspondent of the *New York Journal* and was then picked up by the *Chicago Tribune* on March 1, 1896: “The French cinematograph is a device for throwing pictures made in Edison’s kinetograph on a screen so that they may be viewed by great audiences at a time. This now is followed by an invention by Robert Paul of London called the Theatrograph.” Within days came a boilerplate version headlined “The Theatrograph,” printed in four Ohio papers in the next two weeks, then adapted by the *Los Angeles Times* (March 16) within a feature on “The Field of Electricity.” Publicity about cinema from Europe was thus gaining momentum just as the domestic hype from November 1895 surrounding Jenkins’ and Armat’s Phantoscope had run its course. A similar trajectory of metropolitan publicity greeted the Latham’s Pantoptikon or Eidoloscope between April and July 1895.[39]

News about screen projection provides context for understanding how the newspaper reading public recognized moving pictures as of interest long before the opportunity to experience it in person came along locally months later. In Michael Warner’s sense, the mass public for cinema existed at least a year in advance of its gathering as geographically and temporally dispersed audiences. Strongly including the newspaper promotion of cinema within film history means repositioning cinema as a practice also embedded within the work of publishers and editors, who envisioned their own roles as serving readerships, treated at times interchangeably as markets, at other times as publics. The material of modernity thus becomes evident in the network of newspapers circulating culturally meaningful experience. In embedding cinema within newsprint, the circulation of filmstrips could fulfill a promise made to the public with the earlier circulation of knowledge about cinema. The reading public, the mass market, and cinema’s mass audience are inextricable because the newspaper

encouraged its readers to conceive of themselves as modern by simultaneously being citizens, consumers, and spectators.

Notes

1 W. Bernard Carlson, “Artifacts and Frames of Meaning: Thomas A. Edison, His Managers, and the Cultural Construction of Motion Pictures,” in *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, eds. Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 175–98. Carlson’s essay writes film history as a matter of “science and technology studies,” in which objects are culturally constructed to have social agency. In the same book, Bruno Latour provides an elegant introduction to the theoretical premises of such an approach, which has become known as Actor-Network Theory. See Bruno Latour, “Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts,” in Bijker and Law, *Shaping Technology*, 225–58; and also Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

2 Robert C. Allen and Richard Maltby have argued strongly for a “new cinema history” based upon local practices. Neither is abandoning the prospect of a theorized or generalized statement about cinema, but both insist it be built upon the study of a diversity of grounded practices. See Robert C. Allen, “ Relocating American Film History: The ‘Problem’ of the Empirical,” *Cultural Studies* 20, no. 1 (2006): 48–88; and Richard Maltby, “How Can Cinema History Matter More?,” *Screening the Past* 22 (December 2007), www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/current/issue-22.

3 See Deac Rossell, *Living Pictures: The Origins of the Movies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Hermann Hecht, *Pre-Cinema History: An Encyclopaedia and Annotated Bibliography of the Moving Image before 1896*, ed. Ann Hecht (London: Bowker-Saur Publishers, 1993); and Stephen Herbert, *A History of Pre-Cinema*, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2000).

4 Publicity about Edison’s Kinetograph camera appears as early as “Edison and the Big Fair,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 13, 1891. The marketing of the solitary-viewer Kinetoscope begins with publicity about

the strongman Sandow being photographed at the Edison facilities in Menlo Park, New Jersey, published as early as “Edison’s Latest Invention,” *Atlanta Constitution*, March 9, 1894. Synchronized with a phonograph recording, the Kinetophone was unveiled as early as “A Wonderful Combination,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 1895. All three “inventions” spawned a continental proliferation of news wire, boilerplate, and cut-and-paste articles in the months that followed. Almost all related stories between 1891 and 1895 mention the idealized future of screen projection.

5 Carlson points out, however, that Edison was intent upon a solitary viewer, following the precedent and marketing strategy set by the phonograph (Carlson, “Artifacts and Frames of Meaning,” 182–4). Even as late as April 1895, publicity surrounding the Kinetophone depicted a future screen projection for only two viewers in a private, domestic setting, for example in a widely syndicated feature story used for “Edison’s Latest Marvel,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 14, 1895. See also Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), on the renewed marketing strategy of the phonograph begun in 1889.

6 Paul C. Spehr, *The Man Who Made Movies: W. K. L. Dickson* (Eastleigh: John Libbey, 2008).

7 Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

8 “Domestic production of newsprint increased to 196,000 tons in 1890 and to 569,000 tons in 1899 and per capita consumption to 8 lb. in 1890 and 15 lb. in 1899. Prices of paper declined from $344 a ton in 1866 to $246 in 1870, $138 in 1880, $68 in 1890, and $36 in 1900.… The fast press was developed to the point that 96,000 copies of 8 pages could be produced in an hour in 1893. The linotype with at least five times the type-setting speed of the compositor was introduced in 1886 and was followed by a marked increase in the use of typewriters. It made possible the modern newspaper.” Harold Innis, “Technology and Public Opinion in the United States,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 17, no. 1 (1951): 12–13.

9 For synopses of American newspapers' historical relation to their communities, see Kevin G. Barnhurst and John C. Nerone, *The Form of News: A History* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001); Richard L. Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and their Readers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

10 James W. Carey, "Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph," in *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, revised edition (New York: Routledge, 2009), 155–76.

11 On the history of the telegraph and news wire services in the United States, see Menahem Blondheim, *News Over the Wires: The Telegraph and the* Flow *of Public Information in America, 1844–1897* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); and Richard B. Du Boff, "The Telegraph in Nineteenth-Century America: Technology and Monopoly," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 4 (October 1984): 571–86.

12 Blondheim, *News Over the Wires*, 162.

13 Richard Allen Schwarzlose, *The American Wire Services* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 53.

14 Innis, "Technology and Public Opinion," 15.

15 See W. Joseph Campbell, *The Year that Defined American Journalism: 1897 and the Clash of Paradigms* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

16 Alfred D. Chandler Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap–Harvard University Press, 1977).

17 Carey, "Technology and Ideology," 167.

18 Ibid., 162.

19 Gunther Barth argues that metropolitan newspapers are the foundation of the rise of modern city culture in nineteenth-century America. Although he means to restrict the case to city newspapers read by city people, I am extending this to newspaper reading generally through a focus on the wide circulation of telegraphed features and information. See Gunther Barth, *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 58–109.

20 Paul S. Moore, *Now Playing: Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 158–63.

21 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (New York: Verso, 2006).

22 Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone, 2002), 67.

23 See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

24 Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 88.

25 Ibid., 90–1.

26 Digital newspaper archives provide only a partial and non-representative sample of at-least-weekly publications, of which nearly 20,000 were circulating in the United States and Canada in 1896. Altogether, newspapers were published in nearly 9,000 different towns and cities in North America; in the United States, only 800 cities then had populations of 5,000 people or more (all figures from N. W. Ayer and Son, *American Newspaper Annual* [Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, 1897]). Perhaps 5 percent of these newspapers have been digitized and are searchable online through various databases. A handful of still-dominant mastheads are available through ProQuest subscriptions (the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Toronto Globe*, for example). The Library of Congress has compiled a selection as its *Chronicling America* database. For a modest fee, researchers can access *NewpaperArchive.com* or *GenealogyBank.com*, both of which provide a surprisingly thorough archive of papers from across the United States. A few less populous states and regions have already digitized all available newspapers: Utah, Wyoming, and northern New York, to name a few.

27 Charles Musser, "Introducing Cinema to the American Public: The Vitascope in the United States, 1896–97," in *Moviegoing in America: A Sourcebook in the History of Film Exhibition*, ed. Gregory Waller (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 14.

28 The *New York Times*, for example, does not mention the Vitascope until Bial himself holds a press conference more than a week later to announce

it was booked to soon appear at his music hall ("Edison's Latest Triumph," *New York Times*, April 14, 1896).

29 Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

30 The Vitascope story that ran in the *Los Angeles Times* ("Edison's New Invention," April 4, 1896) is unusual for being a same-day reprinting of the version from the *Herald*. Cited as "Special Dispatch, By Telegraph to the *Times*," this is a rare example of a newspaper using its own telegraphs rather than wire services. The *Herald* version was also reprinted the same day in the *Meriden Republican* (CT) ("Mr. Edison's Latest," April 4, 1896), likely from a printed copy given the proximity to Manhattan.

31 Although Raff & Gammon anticipated Edison would attend a demonstration on March 27, 1896, they reported to Thomas Armat on April 1 that illness had prevented it. Harvard Baker Library, Raff & Gammon fonds, MSS 692, vol. 6: 467.

32 My synopsis of Raff & Gammon's business strategy relies upon correspondence about the sale of the Vitascope's exhibition rights and plans for publicity, as well as correspondence with Thomas Armat and Albert Bial, archived at the Harvard School of Business Baker Library, Raff & Gammon fonds, MSS 692. The 500 pages of volume 3 cover more than a full year up to the day before the press screening on April 3, 1896. The 500 pages of volume 2 cover the single month afterwards until May 5, 1896.

33 Musser, "Introducing Cinema," 14.

34 Ibid.

35 Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture through 1925* (1926; repr., New York: Touchstone–Simon & Schuster, 1986), 226.

36 Ibid., 228.

37 Musser, "Introducing Cinema," 14.

38 Compiling a range of sources (starting with Musser, "Introducing Cinema,"), I have confirmed that moving pictures were exhibited by the end of 1896 in at least 38 American states and five Canadian provinces. By the end of 1897, all present-day states and provinces had hosted

cinema with the possible exception of Alaska (although moving pictures were taken of the Klondike because of the gold rush underway).
39 News about the Phantoscope originated with a *Baltimore Sun* feature on November 13, 1895 and was reprinted, for example, in the *Burlington HawkEye* (IA) (November 14, 1895) and several other places in the next two weeks. The piece was used for a boilerplate item, “Gives Life to Phantoms,” as early as December 26, 1895 in the *San Francisco Call* and other papers throughout January 1896. News about the Pantoptikon began April 22, 1895 in the *New York Sun*, and reprinted as early as the same day, for example, in the *Hamilton Republican* (OH). Citing the renamed Eidoloscope, the *New York World* printed an illustrated Sunday article about it on May 26, 1895, which became a boilerplate item under the headline “Photographing a Wink, and Reproducing It on a Big Canvas Screen.”

21

Storefront Theater Advertising and the Evolution of the American Film Poster

Kathryn H. Fuller-Seeley

Effective on-site visual advertisements were vital to successful storefront film theater operation in the United States. Film exhibitors quipped that “the show starts on the sidewalk.” Nickelodeon managers created eye-catching spectacles, festooning colorful lithographed posters of dramatic scenes, hand-lettered signs, and hand-painted banners across the fronts of their theater spaces. Posters, sometimes aided by music blaring from a phonograph, a barker’s spiel, and printed heralds or handbills, attracted amusement-seekers from the neighborhood, weary shoppers looking for a break, and passers-by lured by their curiosity to see if the moving pictures inside could be as exciting as the promise of the advertising outside.[1]

For much of the early period of film exhibition, however, theater managers had to create their own hand-lettered signs or use lithographs re-purposed from theatrical shows, as, except in a few instances, American film producers did not supply advertising aids. Not until the dawn of the classical Hollywood cinema era did American film studios, compelled by increasing competition from entrepreneurial independent film producers, international distributors, and lithographic printing companies, begin consistently providing posters for new film releases. The motion picture poster’s content evolved over the nickelodeon era, in a context of controversies over their graphic excesses, from simple announcements of film titles and studio trademarks, to film-specific lithographs featuring characters posed in tableau form, to colorful studio-supplied graphics that

displayed an increasing emphasis on portraits of recognizable actors and actresses. Transformed from information sheets identifying the day's reels, posters of the later nickelodeon period helped to fuel moviegoers' interest in narrative, genre, action, and picture personalities.

First Film Advertising

Early film exhibitors' visual advertising drew on the commercial traditions of circuses and itinerant theatrical companies, whose color-saturated posters formed the most prominent of the nineteenth century. "To bill it like a circus," from the days of P. T. Barnum's ballyhoo onward, meant covering every available fence or building exterior with large, brightly colored lithographs crammed with all the excitement of the big top. Parading elephants, zebras, lions, and tigers performing for their trainers, cavorting clowns, and death-defying, scantily clad acrobats seemed to leap off the paper into action. As a typical 1891 newspaper account noted, "The advent of the circus is near at hand. For two weeks past the many-colored posters heralding the event have been scattered with a lavish hand over city and country. With a seeming reckless extravagance the show has been announced in every hamlet, nook and corner for fifty miles in all directions. These circus people have advertising down to a wonderful system. Inside of ten hours a comparatively small force of men can completely cover town and country with flaming posters. What excitement the posting of a circus bill creates in the rural hamlets!"[2]

Circuses and theatrical companies contracted each touring season with commercial printers to produce a range of highly colored lithographs, which ranged from the standard one-sheet (27 × 41 inches) to the larger three sheet (41 × 81 inches) and six sheet posters (81 × 81 inches), to the magnificent twenty-four sheet billboard displays that were eighteen feet long and eight feet high.[3] Show printers were primarily located in Cincinnati and Cleveland, Ohio (the mid-point of most circuses' routes) or in the theatrical center of New York City. Circuses hired gangs of billposters to travel several weeks ahead of the troupe, pick up the lithographs that the printer had shipped in advance to each new location, and cover the town with the

gaudy posters. Smaller theatrical troupes with meager advertising budgets might carry with them a few generic lithographs of melodramatic scenes to embellish the front of opera houses or town halls in which they played, and then distribute less costly black-and-white text posters, programs, and heralds in each new town.

Figure 21.1 The Star Theatre in Herkimer, New York participated in the patriotic celebration of the town's 100th anniversary in August 1907 and attracted women and children to its listing of the day's film titles, which were painted on the storefront theater's windows.

The one-sheet lithographs created in 1895 and 1896 to promote the earliest public screened motion picture entertainments (the Lumière Cinématographe and the Edison Vitascope) took an expansive, educational stance not shared with subsequent cinema advertising. These earliest film posters displayed an omniscient view of the entire film-viewing event, portraying not only a large image of the moving picture on the screen, but also the mechanics of the entertainment (the projector, its operator, and the beam of light that sends moving picture images to the screen) and the audience watching the spectacle, including a display of their reactions (amused, entranced, or startled). The posters provided viewers with a

spectatorial education on what the moving picture show was and how it was experienced. These posters both demystified the technology of the entertainment (by showing that it was produced mechanically and not by magic tricks) and enhanced its attractions. While the Lumière poster depicted an intimate family audience in a café backroom viewing a black-and-white film scene on a screen that was two or three feet in diameter, in Edison's Vitascope poster the screen suspended above the theater stage was impressively enormous and the spectacular, colorful figures of the dancing girls on film dwarfed the enthralled audience. Unlike today's posters, which illustrate the performers, themes, and title of a film, the earliest posters gave equal play to the film, its means of exhibition, and the presence and involvement of its viewers.[4]

Cinema posters sold by the Sears Roebuck mail order catalog in the late 1890s, and those devised by early itinerant exhibitor Lyman Howe and even much smaller troupes such as the Cook & Harris Company, all featured this combination of depictions of the audience, projector, and film image on screen. Howe had earlier utilized a three-part image when promoting his phonograph concerts in the mid-1890s, showing the presenter, mechanical device, and audience, with small drawings of singers' heads or musical notes emerging from the phonograph horn. In his 1897 film advertisements, Howe included a portrait of himself in an upper corner of each poster, creating a distinctive "brand name" image to represent the promise of a high-quality program. By 1902 and 1903, Howe's posters narrowed in more closely on the filmic image, still showing the spectacular display on a large screen framed by a theater's proscenium arch, but only displaying viewers in the first several rows of seats. Subsequently, Howe's posters featured only unframed views of dramatic action or exotic foreign scenery and his head floating approvingly above the screen, or only Howe's portrait. Cook & Harris in 1899 adopted for their program cover a simple woodcut illustration of a small town opera house audience viewing a film of Admiral Dewey's battleship steaming into Manila harbor. They persisted in using the image for nearly ten years, although they faced increasing criticism from potential show sponsors about their out-of-date advertising. Dewey may have been a local celebrity in Cook & Harris's central upstate New York small town territory, as he had a summer home there, but many early film

viewers came to expect picture shows to promote something new or novel if they wanted to attract patrons to their programs.[5]

Turn-of-the-century film producers Edison, Lumière, Méliès, and American Biograph provided scant promotional assistance to early traveling film exhibitors or to those showing films in vaudeville theaters after the initial flurry of posters. Nevertheless, producers did occasionally contract with show printers to create advertising paper for a few special films. In 1902 the Cincinnati show printing companies Hennegan and Donaldson produced programs and handbills for sale to exhibitors featuring black line drawings illustrating early Edison filmed prizefights, President McKinley's funeral procession, *The Passion Play*, and the crime drama *Capture of the Biddle Brothers*.[6]

In 1903 Hennegan produced posters with black-and-white line drawings for two major Edison film releases, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Great Train Robbery*. While the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* posters featured a sedate portrait of author Julia Ward Howe surrounded by her famous characters, similar to the style of their advertising for Edison's *Passion Play*, advertising for *The Great Train Robbery* centered on a dynamic, arresting close-up of the robber pointing his gun at the audience, adapted from the shocking film scene. This robber image itself was probably borrowed, Richard Abel finds, from a then-prominent billboard advertisement for Gold Dust scouring powder entitled "The Highwayman." *Billboard* reported in an article, "Hypnotized by a Poster Man," that a woman in Des Moines, Iowa who had been compelled to gaze day after day at a Gold Dust advertising sign posted across the street from her apartment was "driven to the verge of insanity" by the threatening man. The emotions aroused in spectators by striking images on commercial and entertainment posters would become both an advertising boon and a controversial liability for film exhibitors.[7]

Despite the success of these special posters, however, after 1903 neither Edison nor the other American film studios produced other substantial promotional materials for exhibitors. As Janet Staiger notes, the early film industry faced "structural deficiencies" that impeded wide promotion of their goods: "no regularized production, no routine or predictable distribution, and no reasonable length of exhibition time that would allow

consumer interest in a specific film to develop."[8] Since nickelodeon programs included three, four, five, or more brief films on a variety of subjects that changed semi-weekly or daily, American producers argued that it was ineffective to expend the time and money to develop specific advertising aids for each new one-reel release.[9]

These early lithographer-produced posters were expensive to purchase, so most itinerant film exhibitors turned instead to creating their own promotional materials. Many smaller shows minimized illustrations in their locally printed posters, heralds, and programs and primarily relied on text, such as lists of film titles, descriptions of film scenes, and praise for their show from area churchmen, lodge officials, school principals, and other authorities.

The exception to film producers' cavalier attitude toward assisting American film exhibitors came from France, where the Pathé studio from 1902 onward produced many posters to promote its film subjects and made them available to European and American exhibitors.[10] In a January 1905 advertisement in the *New York Clipper*, Pathé offered "imported color posters" to film purchasers. Pathé also contracted with Hennegan to produce special posters for their 1907 version of *The Passion Play* that incorporated photographs from the film into the printed displays.[11] In 1908 Pathé released a 195-foot film humorously touting the transcendent qualities of its film advertising, *Living Posters*. Its synopsis in *Moving Picture World* noted:

> In this amusing picture we first see a man pasting advertising posters on the fences in a country town. One poster adorning a fence surrounding a barn yard, where a number of cows are grazing, shows the picture of a cow's head. As the curious crowd stands gazing at the poster one of the animals pokes its head through it and makes it appear as if the poster had really come to life. The next shows a large poster advertising a brand of champagne, with a picture of a bottle standing out in bold relief. A man with a hose on the other side of the fence puts the crowd to root when he pokes the nozzle through the picture and makes it appear that the bottle is in motion. The last poster is one of Pathe Freres [*sic*], showing a number of dancing girls. The crowd is dumbfounded

when the objects in the picture come to life and dance a beautiful ballet.[12]

Show Printer Offerings

In the absence of film title-specific posters offered by the American studios, early exhibitors cobbled together other types of visual displays. Like small-time traveling theatrical troupes and many vaudeville theaters, film exhibitors drew up informational posters all in text announcing their itinerant troupe's or theater's name and the type of entertainment offered.[13] These most basic posters, programs, and handbills could be commissioned from local printers across the United States. Show printers Hennegan and Donaldson offered a line of upscale stock text posters in one or two colors announcing "baseball game," "county fair," "medicine show," "illustrated lecture," or "moving picture show." They sold other elaborate generic announcement posters that added illustrations of pretty girls or decorative scrollwork border designs. As late as 1911, Hennegan's catalog still offered to the most rural or conservative film exhibitors a one-sheet text poster that harkened back to the earliest days of cinema, announcing "Magnificent animated pictures, augmented with startling mechanical effects – wonderfully realistic – absolutely new."[14]

Figure 21.2 This rural Amusement Hall (location unknown) demonstrates the longevity of nickelodeon-era advertising practices, with the smiling staff posed at the entrance of the sparsely decorated barn, which sported well-worn posters for the evening's features *Triple Clue* (1920) and *Jerry's Blow Out* (1915–17).

To obtain more dramatic pictorial representations of the entertainment, early cinema showmen could obtain from the show printers a selection of generic theatrical lithographs (or stock paper) illustrating familiar dramatic scenes rather than promoting a specific play; these were also frequently used by traveling theatrical companies and Wild West shows.[15] Highly colored posters from the theatrical version of *The Great Train Robbery* (printed by the Strobridge Company of Cincinnati) were acquired by some exhibitors in 1903 and 1904 to impress potential moving picture viewers with the action, drama, and violence similarly offered by the popular film. Colorful stock theatrical lithographs depicting cowboys chasing Indians, young damsels in distress, frightened mothers clutching their babies, brave heroes desperately battling villains, and other typical scenes from nineteenth-century melodramas, all made adequate illustrations to convey the excitement of early cinema.

These sensationalistic, action-packed, highly colored images undoubtedly drew attention and potential patrons to nickelodeon theaters, but such posters could be exceedingly graphic in their depictions of violence and female pulchritude. Conservative critics frequently objected to the outlandish posters as being lurid and offering false promises of what the

motion picture show could provide, and so these re-purposed theatrical posters continually stirred up controversy for nickelodeon shows. The entertainment industry trade papers regularly reported that religious conservatives in Boston, throughout the South, and elsewhere made noisy protests against the menace of “flaming posters.”[16]

In his 1915 guide to picture theater advertising, trade journal columnist Epes Winthrop Sargent would rue the early days when nickelodeons used re-purposed theatrical lithographs:

> Probably we shall never know the hurt that was done in the business in the early days by the injudicious use of stock paper. Exhibitors thought the most sensational scenes the most attractive, and a clean story of rural life might be advertised by a river scene in which one man was throwing another from a bridge while a second pair engaged in a knife fight in the water, and in the foreground a black-bearded pirate playfully beat a golden haired heroine over the head with an oar. Naturally a collection of half a dozen such affairs were attention attracting. More persons saw the posters than saw the films and gradually the impression was created that films were vicious. After that the censorship![17]

Nickelodeon Posters

As stationary nickelodeon theaters grew in number in 1905 and film exhibitors sought to attract local patrons repeatedly to their theaters, effective advertising of the film show’s daily changes became even more necessary. American film studios still offered little assistance, however. The new film rental exchanges, trying to provide improved customer service to theater owners, attempted to offer advertising assistance, but it was a hit-or-miss proposition. In March 1905 the Miles Brothers Exchange claimed, “We can supply you with large quantities of finest color posters,” but the film exhibitor had no real guarantee of the suitability of such materials.[18] In May 1907 the Miles Brothers announced they had a “full line of fine lithographs,” photos, and other paper to accompany the Burns–O’Brien fight pictures, but “First orders will get the goods,” the Miles advertisement

warned, “Only a few sets in existence.”[19] Even when American film producers began to make the effort to create promotional aids for their major releases, they could not meet the ever-growing demand. How many exhibitors complained, as did N. E. Wells, of Wells’ Enterprises – High Class Vaudeville and Life Motion Moving Pictures, to Colonel William Selig: “Enclosed find 15c in stamps. Kindly send me a litho. ½ sheet of the *Spirit of 76* [Selig, 1908]. I am unable to secure any, anywhere in New York and as I am using the picture at a special arranged church entertainment, it will oblige me very much if you will kindly send same by return mail.”[20]

Figure 21.3 The newly opened Desert Lily airdome (open air nickelodeon) in Needles, California in May 1914 advertised its evening program through sidewalk displays of posters for Lubin, Selig, and Vitagraph films (note Vitagraph’s use of a photograph instead of artwork), and additional pages from the trade press mounted on a board to provide viewers with further information.

In July 1909 *Moving Picture World* bemoaned the continued reluctance of the film producers to spend the extra money to provide extensive promotional materials, reporting that many exhibitors wished to display photographs of scenes from current film releases: “But the manufacturers

do not see it in the same light. If they supplied photographs, at great expense, to all exhibitors, it is doubtful if it would result in the sale of any additional copies of the films." The writer suggested that needy theater owners could instead tack up illustrations and film synopses clipped from the trade journals on their lobby walls.[21]

It took the efforts of lithographers and the new independent film producers, working outside the purview of the General Film Company Trust, to increase the quantity and quality of posters available to nickelodeon operators. In July 1908 the Title Poster Company of New York began placing regular advertisements in *Moving Picture World*, offering posters printed in two colors that provided text of studio name and title information covering the productions of Vitagraph, Biograph, Edison, and the others.[22] Kessel and Bauman's independent studio, the New York Motion Picture Company (opened in May 1909), which produced Bison westerns, is generally considered to be the first US film producer to make a major effort to supply film exchanges with lithographs and printed descriptive posters for each new release.[23] In October 1909 the New York Motion Picture Company announced in the pages of *Variety* "an innovation which shows the rapid steps forward in the moving picture game. Lithographs made especially for the different pictures are now being sent out." The studio proudly described a new poster for their film *Dove Eye's Gratitude*, whose lithograph shows the burning of the pioneers' cabin.[24]

Responding finally to exhibitor demands in late 1909, Edison and the General Film Company studios contracted with the A.B.C. Company lithographers of Cleveland, Ohio to print a line of posters for each film brand. Edison, Vitagraph, Kalem, Pathé, Selig, and Essanay subsequently advertised poster availability in their trade journal notices. Nickelodeon theater managers began to be able to obtain simple one- or two-colored posters from the General Film Company studios with text announcing "Biograph Films Today," or "Selig Films Here," promoting the studio brand with a trademark symbol but not the titles of specific pictures being shown.

More elaborate film-specific posters for General Film Company studios' most prominent releases were four-color lithographs that emphasized the name and brand symbol of the studio, the title of the film, and contained a

bright yet bland drawn illustration of a film character or two. These posters were created in a hurried fashion by anonymous show printer staff artists, who adapted images from still photographs taken on the film set, enlarging the photograph and tracing out the main characters who were gathered, frozen stiffly in nineteenth-century tableau style. A history of film posters notes that "strict censorship standards" imposed by General Film Company leaders on its member studios forbade anything more exciting or revealing.[25]

In January 1910 Vitagraph credited itself with an advertising innovation, the "Vitagraph idea" for "original posters" – "a group of large half-tone reproductions from photographs of some of the actual scenes in the film."[26] These posters were printed in black with one or two bright colors in the background, and emphasized text and photographs instead of colorful drawn illustrations. Information about the film was foregrounded, including the title and studio name and trademark symbol, and a paragraph of printed text describing the plot. Vitagraph touted these posters as more truthful and realistic, demonstrating the real feel of the film and avoiding excess or dullness. Both types of General Film Company members' posters equally emphasized the brand name of the studio and the film action (but never performers' identities). The producers' main goal was to build brand loyalty, as they hoped to guide nickelodeon viewers (and thus exhibitors) to recognize a studio "brand" for its quality or style and demand more pictures from that studio.

Nervous General Film Company officials still distrusted the power of the poster to promote one member studio's product to the detriment of others, however, and as tame as these first advertising aids might have seemed, they must have had box office impact. Nickelodeon exhibitors were "shocked," *Variety* reported in June 1910, to have all posters banned by jealous Edison Company executives just six months after their introduction. The Edison bloc was rumored to be so jealous of the growing popularity and reputation of rival member Biograph's films that they engineered a ban on all colored lithographs (even the "Biograph Films Today" placards) "to equalize the playing field" at picture houses. Exhibitors apparently revolted and the ban was soon lifted, but the incident reveals the intra-studio

factionalism that stymied the development of sophisticated film advertising.[27]

As the competition for nickelodeon exhibitors' business increased between General Film Company studios and the Independents, posters became an attractive business lure. Now both Trust and Independent studios offered promotional materials, but the Independents vociferously proclaimed the superiority of their service to picture theaters, demonstrated by their provision of better color lithographs and free posters. In January 1910 the Nestor studio offered full-sheet color lithographs for its most prominent films. Great Western, Powers, World, and Bison advertisements announced they would provide free posters to exhibitors, Bison promising both four-color lithographs and printed posters with title and synopsis of each subject.[28] When the Thanhouser studio advertised their first release in March 1910, *The Actor's Children*, their trade journal announcement promised posters to accompany the films that were "beautiful and business-pulling."[29]

Discussion of the importance of posters also surfaced in the nickelodeon trade press, as advertisements and articles alerted exhibitors to the materials that the Trust film producers were beginning to create. As the American studios began producing one-reel melodramas and comedies that featured more fully realized characters and more complex dramatic scenes, illustrating the theme of each film release with a printed description or a poster image also became more practical to produce. A *Moving Picture World* essay on "The Poster End" commented:

> The poster is or has been the Ishmael of the moving picture business. Until recently nobody seemed to care for him. Any old thing in the way of a crude design and crude printing suited your indifferent moving picture theater exhibitor – any old thing with some idea of the dramatic situation and plenty of crude color was considered good enough to put outside the moving picture theater. But a little while ago it occurred to some alert minds that better things than these could be done, and so the manufacturers and others have been sending out especially made posters illustrating the particular pictures shown. One or two of the manufacturers have had pieces of their film subjects suitably enlarged,

and these when surrounded with striking borders make very effective posters.[30]

Better Cinema Posters

Debates ensued over what were the most effective posters for studios to produce and for nickelodeons to display. Conservative critics' frequent complaints about "lurid" theatrical-style posters led some studios and exhibitors to favor a quieter, more informative approach with advertisements that used only actual scenes from the film in photographic form and text descriptions of the film's plot. "Original Posters," a January 1910 *Moving Picture World* article, praised Vitagraph's more restrained photographic posters for their realism: "For two or three weeks the Vitagraph Company have been sending out a large poster which is a distinct departure from the usual flashy thing, which generally gives a wrong impression of the character of the subject. The Vitagraph idea is a large group of half tone reproductions from photographs of some of the actual scenes of the film and these are surrounded by graceful and artistic designs of a subdued tint in harmony with the color of the photograph. These attractive posters are sold at a very low price and are in great vogue judging from the increased demand."[31]

Other critics disparaged the blandness of General Film Company member studios' posters. Exhibitor Hans Leigh wrote into the *Moving Picture World* in December 1909, charging:

> The self-evident purpose of a motion picture poster is to tell the public what the film is about, and naturally enough it should draw the attention of the public to the most striking incident of the play. But this is exactly what most of the posters utterly fail to do.
>
> A few days ago I received a consignment of about twenty posters purporting to illustrate the most recent films on the market. In nearly every case a man and a girl were looking at each other, but neither was doing anything in particular. At this moment I have five or six of them before me, and here are some of the thrilling spectacles they present:

A man looking over a girl's shoulder
A girl looking at a man
A man holding a girl's hand
A man looking at a girl
A girl giving a drink to a man
An old man and a girl looking at each other with two plow horses near by
A man showing a picture to a girl

Now, wouldn't it be just as easy, and just as cheap, to make these people do something that would make a passerby want to pay a nickel to see?

Do the manufacturers of posters imagine that a great and intelligent public can be lured into the nickelodeons by the spectacle of a young couple giving each other pleasant looks? Or even drinks of water and picture post cards? If so, they should feel the public pulse a little more carefully.

The fact is that the public wants to see "doings" and there must be doings in the posters, and not subtle suggestions of a "tiff" with Johnny.[32]

The independent film producers gained prominence by providing local exhibitors a much broader variety of posters and advertising aids than did the General Film Company studios. The longer, more spectacular three-, five-, and six-reel films produced by the Independents could be promoted as "specials" and "features" and benefited from the application of more promotional ballyhoo. Carl Laemmle of IMP pushed film advertising to new heights in many ways, from creating the first public relations campaign surrounding a picture personality (spreading rumors that Florence Lawrence had been killed in a streetcar accident) to extensive and flamboyant use of posters in promoting his films. In November 1911 Laemmle boosted the release of an unimpressive IMP film, *From the Bottom of the Sea*, by providing exhibitors with a huge run of six-sheet lithographed posters printed by Hennegan. The film subsequently turned out to be a big box office success; Laemmle's innovative poster promotion scheme spurred

other film producers to increase their poster orders for each new release from 150 to several thousand copies.[33]

By 1910, the growing desires of nickelodeon audiences to identify their favorite actors and actresses and the efficacy of promoting the appearance of prominent film performers as a way to spur frequent attendance led nickelodeon managers to publicize the identities and likenesses of leading film players. Audiences and nickelodeon operators put increasing pressure on film producers to provide materials that would enable theaters to advertise cinema performers.[34]

The Independents again led the way in actor promotions, with Adolph Zukor and George Kleine proudly proclaiming that their films starred the great actress Sarah Bernhardt and other Italian and French tragedians in their imported films. In 1910 Carl Laemmle lured Mary Pickford, Florence Lawrence, and King Baggot to the IMP studio and promoted them heavily in advertising that may not have been artistically superior to the General Film Company posters but was produced and displayed in much greater quantity. By early 1910 Kalem and Vitagraph were the first members of the Edison film trust consortium to begin to publicize the likenesses and names of their actors in advertising, with Kalem offering posters illustrating cast members and Vitagraph promoting their "Vitagraph Girl" (actress Florence Turner) in posters and sheet music.[35] Kalem also sold nickelodeons a special wooden sandwich board-style lobby stand with which to display player photographs, which was both refined and expensive, costing exhibitors $16.00.[36] In November 1911 the Exhibitors Advertising and Specialty Company of New York also promoted a turn away from dangerously violent posters to more easily accepted promotions of the actors, urging nickelodeon managers to leave melodramatic, deceptive posters behind, as "patrons of moving picture shows have come to look upon the members of the moving picture companies as favorites."[37]

The continually evolving structure of the film industry compelled both the established and the newer film producers to compete for exhibitors' business, and promotional aids were one of many areas in which the struggle played out. By 1913 a full-fledged war raged in the pages of the film exhibitor trade journals, as the new states' rights distributors upped the

ante by promising exhibitors massive and elaborate advertising campaigns to promote the sensational feature-length films they peddled. “Show us the lithographs!” was the exhibitor’s cry, said one states’ rights film distributor. “Ginger Up the Front of Your House with the highest class posters ever used for moving pictures,” claimed Universal in response. “Let Us Assume Your Advertising Worries,” the General Film Company pleaded to exhibitors. “Don’t fret about Posters, Banners, Slides, Date Strips, Display Photographs, Frames, Photos of Actors and Actresses appearing in Licensed Films and other advertising helps that every exhibitor needs to conduct a successful show. That’s our business. We can fit you out completely with dispatch and at prices you couldn’t beat if you shopped the world over.”[38]

Despite these brave claims, too often posters remained merely an afterthought for the General Film Company studios. When exhibitor Bert Cook sought special advertising materials for the Vitagraph two-reel version of James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Deerslayer* (1913), which had been shot on location in his home village of Cooperstown, he repeatedly contacted the film rental exchange in Albany and the Vitagraph offices in Brooklyn, desperately trying to locate one- and three-sheet posters and heralds. Neither could assist him; they just kept advising him to write to Donaldson printers and said that they didn’t keep advertising material on hand. This was not a customer service system geared to help an ambitious exhibitor’s film promotion plans.[39]

Nickelodeon Poster Practices

As they developed on-site advertising plans, storefront theater managers may have perused the exhibitor trade journals and show printer catalogs, but the recommendations they encountered may have clashed with the limitations of the real-life situations faced by individual exhibitors. Local ordinances might restrict signage or any overly enthusiastic display of posters on public sidewalks or buildings. A nickelodeon theater’s location in extremes of urban, rural, or suburban residential areas might limit the efficacy of advertising at the front of their house. An examination of photographs of early film theaters, however, indicates that most

nickelodeon operators followed one of several paths when it came to promoting their programs and attracting patrons.

Some of the earliest, smallest, and barest storefront theaters kept their visual advertising to a minimum, barely announcing a theater name or its symbol and the price of admission painted on the wall above a small ticket window. No posters or signs are in sight in photographs of bare-bones picture theaters such as the Royal in Nacogdoches, Texas. Perhaps in practice, lists of the evening's films were posted on a chalkboard, or a barker standing outside the building called attention to the show to lure people inside.[40]

A step up was the simple nickelodeon that used hand-lettered daily announcements to advertise the day's show. In Herkimer, New York these were painted on the front windows of the Star Theater, a Main Street storefront; at others like the Scenic in Storm Lake, Iowa, the day's titles were chalked on a large blackboard display propped up next to the box office. Many small town nickelodeons that were photographed, such as the Jewel Theater in Hartford, Arkansas, display such touches of a family or "mom-and pop" operation, where the vast majority of advertising was created by the operators, and spread through the neighborhood by passersby and by word of mouth.[41]

Figure 21.4 A nickelodeon's two greatest advertisements – a pretty girl at the box office, and a dramatic poster. The ticket seller poses with a poster for Thanhouser's 1910 detective film *Love and the Law* (location unknown).

The other extreme of the American nickelodeon period was the simple storefront-converted-into-theater that was covered from ground to roof with a stitched-together amalgamation of six-sheet posters, banners, and signs hung in every manner possible. The “wildcat” style of poster advertising could signal the appearance of a special states’ rights feature film or the visit of a traveling film show to a local theater. Many of these “wildcat” poster displays at nickelodeons featured Wild West themes. Richly detailed photographs such as one in Poultney, Ohio and other small town theaters show such nearly-out-of-control displays mounted by the Longhorn Feature Company, which traveled with a film called *Buffalo Jones Lassoing Wild Animals in Africa* and cast members appearing “in person,” including a man dressed as cowboy Jones and several men and women in elaborate Native American headdresses and blankets. Displays such as that at the Princess Theater in Oklahoma also demonstrate the strong pull of such voluptuous advertising, as the sidewalk is crowded with children highly animated with excitement in perusing the colorful promises of the show inside.[42] Other theaters perhaps only indulged in “wildcat” advertising displays during periods of intense competition with neighboring theaters, resulting in riotous displays such as the posters, patriotic portraits, and bunting displayed at the Senate 5c Theater (used to promote a George Washington-themed picture). The huge vogue for Charlie Chaplin in 1915 was made

tangible in massive collections of Keystone and Essanay posters added to the regular fare that festooned the Colonial Theater in Rockford, Illinois and the Rex in Ogden, Utah.

Other nickelodeon theaters, more likely to be located in the suburban retail districts of larger cities or on the main streets of larger towns, emphasized the spectacular nature of their exterior decoration over the poster advertising for any particular film. The Lubin Theater in Richmond, Virginia, with its huge roof-top painted-tin Medusa's head ablaze with light bulbs, the Princess Theater in Milwaukee that lit up at night to resemble a gigantic winged moth, and the Liberty in Los Angeles (which boasted a huge Lady Liberty atop the façade) are examples. For some nickelodeons, the decoration and illumination were the most prominent promotional features used to attract patrons every night.[43]

The majority of photographs of early nickelodeons across the US (urban, suburban, and rural) show modestly decorated theater buildings with a line of four, five, six, or more posters displayed on sandwich boards scattered along the sidewalk around the box office, or leaning up against the building affixed to plywood plank, such as theaters like the Alamo in Bucksport, Maine, or the Jest-a-Meer for African American audiences in St. Louis, Missouri. In many photos, such as one of the Electric Theater in East St. Louis, Illinois, the poster displays are accompanied by phalanxes of smartly dressed men and women smiling for the camera – the owners and staff of the local nickelodeon. The posters and nickelodeon workers blend together to symbolize a type of entertainment that is at once exotic and exciting, local and familiar.[44] Photographs of these nickelodeons illustrate their place in "everyday life" with passersby casually glancing at the posters or small children studying them intently. An equal number of nickelodeon photographs show them using the four-color lithographs or the still-photograph-and-text posters of the "Vitagraph idea." Exhibitors often added paper strips to their posters indicating that this was the day's big feature. Sometimes nickelodeon managers supplemented the posters with display cards providing their own written descriptions of the film plots, or they noted the prominent film players appearing in the film.

A growing trend among "upscale" theaters toward the end of the nickelodeon period was an attempt to regularize, harness, and tame the

vibrant posters by placing them in elaborate metal frames, or in poster cases mounted on the exterior walls and lobbies of their show houses. Many photographs of theaters from the transitional era of American cinema indicate exhibitors' attempts to organize the chaos of unruly posters (a move that dovetails with the rise of the feature-film dominated program) by creating a permanent place for displaying changing images, limiting their number, and making a few important posters represent the entire program. This is a model for what would become the classical Hollywood mode of on-site theater visual advertising.

Advertising Controversies

As nickelodeon exhibitors struggled to publicize their programs amidst the vibrant swirl of commercial culture in large cities and small towns, they frequently encountered objections to their promotional methods. Many of the earliest legal conflicts over film censorship involved controversial poster images placed outside the theater instead of concern about the moving images projected inside on the screen. Authorities in Chicago ruled in 1906 against the public display of "indecent" or overly suggestive, lurid, or violent posters at nickelodeons.[45] In 1909 a New York state law declared it a misdemeanor to display a poster "which tends to demoralize the morals of youth."[46] Religious and municipal authorities from Boston, Washington DC, Virginia, Georgia, and Cleveland, Ohio to Redlands, California soon followed suit.[47] The *New York World* in 1910 started a public campaign, excoriating nickel theaters throughout the boroughs for displaying "lurid, flaming, blood and thunder posters" across their lobbies and theater-front sidewalks.[48] In 1912, however, an exhibitor in New York State who was hauled into court for displaying an objectionable poster escaped a fine by showing the judge the film connected with the poster, demonstrating that the "objectionable" scene depicted on the poster came straight from the film, which had been passed by the National Board of Review.[49]

Figure 21.5 The Hippodrome Theater in Miami utilized "wildcat"-style advertising, festooning its front with a mass of eye-catching posters to promote the 1914 Universal serial *Lucille Love, Girl of Mystery*.

Exhibitors' trade journal columnist F. H. Richardson described in 1910 a malady called "Posteritis" or "The Poster Bug" afflicting nickelodeon managers who felt compelled to string six, eight, or sixteen posters across the front of their nickelodeon theaters, visually shouting out the excitement and action of the program. Too often, he charged, the posters did not have any connection with the films the theater was currently showing. Richardson fretted that this would drive an intelligent patron away, thinking that the show was a "fake" and would not deliver all that was promised. Instead, Richardson recommended that exhibitors use just one or two posters neatly framed in glass cases to add to the attractiveness of a theater front. Restrained use of appropriate posters let patrons know "what particular brand of joy awaits on the inside."[50]

The tremendous competition in the film industry of the mid-1910s, with the rise of independent film studios, the increased number of feature-length films, and the struggle between existing nickelodeons and new larger theaters to capture cinema patrons' business, contributed to a rash of ever-

larger, color- and action-filled posters striving to gain viewers' attention. The popularity of serial and mystery films also lent itself easily to lurid advertisements of women in peril.[51] A 1915 editorial in *Moving Picture World* noted a particularly egregious example, a poster for the film *By Whose Hands?* (American Film Mfg.):

> What would you think of a three sheet showing a woman sitting on a bench with two mysterious arms emerging from the surrounding shrubbery; one arm grasping the woman's throat and the other buried in her hair, while the woman looks as distressed as possible. They are the hands of a strong, sinewy man, whose face and figure are invisible. The reading matter on the poster consists of this question: 'Whose Hands?' Frankly speaking, we do not know but would like to propound this counter question: whose brains and whose taste? We are informed that the whole film is a 'torrent of thrills' concluding with 'terrific climaxes and a veritable phalanx of episodal force.' Man, you are going back to the stone ages of the industry.[52]

Children's education expert Ernest Dench cautioned parents against the "Motion Picture Poster Menace" to which vulnerable children were exposed every time they loitered outside a nickelodeon. The suggestive scenes and dangerous stunts depicted in the colorful promotional materials might impress bad ideas into children's minds that would surely drive them to leap off cliffs or begin a life of crime. The bright colors and action made them seem too attractive. Dench thought the posters least likely to harm young viewers were ones that did not depict suggestive scenes in four-color printing, but which contained several well-balanced photographs inside a printed frame.[53]

In July 1915 the Portland, Oregon censorship board reported to the city commission that too often posters with misleadingly violent graphic content lured children into the picture theaters with "criminal and exciting scenes" often not found in the films they showed. Mrs. E. B. Coldwell complained that exhibitors going to the exchange grab the "paper" with too-exciting color lithographs, suggesting that the censorship board should have to pass on both the paper and the films. She suggested that displaying actual photographs of film scenes would be better than the lurid posters.[54]

Conclusion: Toward the Classical Hollywood Cinema Poster

In 1909 a *Moving Picture World* columnist pondered the future direction of poster advertising:

> Are we near the time when the billboard will contain 24-sheet posters illustrating some scene in a Pathe [*sic*] or Biograph film? Shall we see fine specimens of color printing, good design and all the rest of it, advertising the films all over the country? Are we, in short to witness the theatricalization of the moving picture at the poster end of the matters? It certainly looks as if we are.… If we are on the eve of a reform in the poster end of matters, and if we should get an artistic and commercial development of the moving picture poster, the mind is staggered by the possible extent of the business, which is bound, in the nature of things, to multiply so enormously that the existing manufacturers in the wild will hardly be able to cope with the demand like to be thus created.… Let the moving picture poster be produced on the same scale of size and quality as the ordinary theater poster, and no man can tell how much money exhibitors, renters and manufacturers will make.[55]

By the end of the nickelodeon era, some of these predictions had come true, although the General Film Company studios were not the ones who took full advantage of the promotional power of cinema promotions. By 1915, the new generation of film production companies, who exerted control over their own film distribution and marketing, began to take more responsibility for the production of effective but unobjectionable posters. Rather than leaving all the creative work to the lithograph companies, the Independent studios were the first to create full-time advertising departments and bring them within the studio hierarchy. They increasingly designed their own posters in-house and controlled their own poster printing and distribution through their film exchanges. This move dovetailed with the Independents' increasing efforts to promote their actors and actresses. More of their posters than those of the fading General Film

Company studios emphasized the portraits and names of the stars as well as the film title or narrative plot of the film.

The trade journal publicity for the independent film studio Thanhouser Company in 1915, promoting a new line of advertising materials, critiqued what they considered the dull, lifeless style of previous cinema poster art. Thanhouser announced it had now contracted with George Peters, whom the studio termed "probably the best known poster artist in the country," to produce poster illustrations for their serial *The $20,000,000 Mystery*: "Peters, it will be remembered, established a new era in posters when he entered the moving picture field, as it was he who first deviated from the old way of taking a still picture and making it do the work as a subject for a poster." They lauded Peters' use of striking colors "and the sensational manner in which he plays up his action without deviating from the subject in hand." One six-sheet poster contained large portraits of the serials' stars in "a layout that is distinctly original and unique. Another good feature of this striking poster is that fact that it can be used for all succeeding episodes of the Mystery, as it applies to the whole series as well to the current release."[56]

By 1914 and 1915, with the rise of "feature-length" films of five and six reels, independent producers were adapting well-known theatrical plays into films and both promoting film performers as stars (such as Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, and Theda Bara) or touting the appearance of actors with Broadway experience in their films (Fannie Ward, William S. Hart, and others). Increasingly, the posters produced to advertise these films prominently featured the close-up likeness of the picture performer and fewer broad scenes of action. Additionally, feature film producers such as Paramount, Universal, Metro, World, and Fox also promoted their prominent film players to a much greater degree than had the nickelodeon-era studios.[57] They made more picture postcards for nickelodeon managers to give away at the theater, more spectacular posters to post around town, more elaborate heralds, and more pressbooks and other material for advertising campaigns, all ready made for exhibitors, with professional looking illustrated ads and feature stories on the stars to fill the local newspaper pages.

Film exhibitors who had weathered the transitions over the decade-long evolution from simple storefront picture-show operations to the hurley-burley of vibrantly decorated nickelodeons toward more the more permanent Main Street presence of community cinemas had experienced a similar trajectory in their on-site promotional practices. From simple printed signs announcing a moving picture entertainment, to the use of re-purposed theatrical posters to emphasize the action and excitement of early film programs, to hand-lettered lists of the titles of the day's assorted film subjects, to the nickelodeon-era poster that used tableau-style pictures, film titles, and studio brand names to convey something about the rudimentary plot of a General Film Company one-reel subject, nickelodeon exhibitors had pulled together a variety of pictorial and textual advertising strategies to communicate the content of their programs to potential patrons.

Moviegoers had also been educated by posters in film spectatorship during this period. The earliest cinema advertising images had explained to them what motion picture entertainment was and how to experience it. Potential moviegoers had learned that they could "window shop" for their screen entertainment at the storefront theater by perusing the day's film titles as they walked down the street. Young viewers, especially, were drawn like moths to the flame by exciting, colorful lithographs stationed on sandwich boards outside nickelodeons, and the entertainment of staring at the outlandish posters could be had for free.

Nevertheless, the attractiveness or promotional pull of those posters could be a liability for nickelodeon operators if conservative elements of the community took offense at the "flaming" images of violence or sexual display. Theater managers who sought a permanent place on Main Street learned to compromise between "wildcat" displays of advertising ballyhoo and commercial invisibility, choosing posters and visual advertising displays that were enticing but did not overly flout community standards. The maturing film industry's standardization of promotional materials and growing focus on advertising their actors and actresses, as would be practiced during the era of classical Hollywood cinema, were effective responses to the needs of local film exhibitors – so much so that by 1915, when *Variety* columnist Epes Winthrop Sargent published his exhibitors' guide, *Picture Theater Advertising*, he considered the film poster situation

now optimized by the studios and their distribution arms for the needs of large urban theaters and small town houses alike, and concentrated all his efforts on writing effective newspaper advertisements and creating special on-site publicity stunts.

Notes

1 On the history of visual and auditory promotion in early US film exhibition, see Gregory Waller, ed., *Moviegoing in America: A Sourcebook in the History of Film Exhibition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); Ina Rae Hark, ed., *Exhibition: The Film Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); Rick Altman and Richard Abel, eds., *The Sounds of Early Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); and Gary D. Rhodes, "The Origin and Development of the American Moving Picture Poster," *Film History* 19 (2007): 228–46.

2 "The Circus Is Coming," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 25, 1891, 23.

3 Cinema posters adopted these standard paper sizes. See "Art and Growth in Posters," *New York Sun* [n.d.], reprinted in *Current Literature: A Magazine of Record and Review* 17, no. 1 (January 1895): 422–3; and Herbert Cecil Duce, *Poster Advertising* (Chicago: Blakely Printing, 1912), 196.

4 See Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, "Viewing the Viewers: Representations of the Audience in Early Cinema Advertising," in *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era*, eds. Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 112–28.

5 See Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).

6 See Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 5.

7 See Abel, *Red Rooster Scare*, 15.

8 See Janet Staiger, “Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising,” *Cinema Journal* 29, no. 3 (1990): 3.

9 Ibid.

10 See Richard Abel, *The Cine Goes to Town: French Cinema 1894–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 30, 100, 122.

11 Pathe ad, *New York Clipper*, January 21, 1905, 1141; Hennegan ad, *Moving Picture World* 1, no. 33 (October 19, 1907): 524.

12 “New Pathe Releases,” *Moving Picture World* 3, no. 4 (July 25, 1908): 71.

13 See Bernard Sobel, *A Pictorial History of Vaudeville* (New York: Citadel Press, 1961), 48, 51, 62.

14 Hennegan catalog 16 (1911), Hennegan Papers, Cincinnati Historical Society, 5.

15 See Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Picture Theater Advertising* (New York: Moving Picture World, 1915), 59.

16 “Ministers Wage War on Posters,” *Atlanta Constitution*, February 21, 1899, 7; “Flashy Posters are Denounced,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 25, 1910, 8; “Churches Oppose Wells Playhouse,” *Richmond News Leader*, April 7, 1911, 7.

17 Sargent, *Picture Theater Advertising*, 59–60.

18 Miles Brothers ad, *New York Clipper*, March 4, 1905, 52.

19 Miles Brothers ad, *Moving Picture World* 1, no. 11 (May 18, 1907): 176; Weirs ad, *Moving Picture World* 1, no. 41 (December 14, 1907): 667.

20 Wells to Selig, August 22, 1908, Selig Collection, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles, CA.

21 “Advertising Feature Films,” *Moving Picture World* 5, no. 5 (July 31, 1909): 152.

22 Title Poster Company ad, *Moving Picture World* 3, no. 4 (July 25, 1908): 625.

23 See Robert Grau, *Theater of Science* (New York: Broadway, 1914), 167; *Moving Picture World* 4, no. 25 (June 22, 1909): 890; Bison ad, *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 1 (January 8, 1910): 3.

24 “‘Billing’ for Pictures,” *Variety*, October 30, 1909, 10.

25 See article on motion picture poster history at http://www.learnaboutmovieposters.com/newsite/index/countries/us/history/history.asp; accessed November 28, 2010.

26 “Original Posters,” *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 4 (January 29, 1910): 122.

27 “Holding Down the Biograph,” *Variety*, June 18, 1910, 11.

28 Nestor ad, *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 1 (January 8, 1910): 38; Bison ad, *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 2 (January 15, 1910): 43.

29 Thanhouser ad, *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 10 (March 12, 1910): 363; Kleine and Warner’s ads, *New York Clipper*, September 16, 1913, 12.

30 “The Poster End,” *Moving Picture World* 5, no. 22 (November 27, 1909): 750.

31 “Original Posters,” *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 4 (January 29, 1910): 122.

32 Hans Leigh, “Some Poor Posters,” *Moving Picture World* 5, no. 23 (December 4, 1909): 793.

33 See Janice Steinberg, “Showmanship in Printing: A Centennial History of the Hennegan Company, 1886–1986” (unpublished manuscript located at Cincinnati Historical Society, 1986), 23–5.

34 See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); and Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

35 See Abel, *Red Rooster Scare*, 148.

36 Kalem Players article with illustration, *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 2 (January 15, 1910): 42.

37 “Film Fans and Posters,” *New York Dramatic Mirror*, November 15, 1911, 13.

38 “Show us,” *Moving Picture World* 18, no. 9 (November 29, 1913): 877; “Let us assume,” *Moving Picture World* 18, no. 8 (November 22, 1913): 943; “Ginger up,” *Moving Picture World* 18, no. 9 (November 29, 1913): 1106.

39 Bert Cook to Vitagraph Company, Cook and Harris Papers, File 1913, New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, NY.

40 See the photograph of the Royal Theater in Fuller, *At the Picture Show*, 39. Examples can be found in Q. David Bowers, *Nickelodeon Theaters and Their Music* (Vestal: Vestal Press, 1986); and Q. David Bowers and Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, *1000 Nights at the Movies* (Atlanta: Whitman, forthcoming).

41 See the photograph of the Jewel Theater in Fuller, *At the Picture Show*, 31.

42 See the photograph of the Princess Theater in Fuller, *At the Picture Show*, 179; see "wildcat" display in the photograph of the nickelodeon in Poultney, Ohio in Fuller, *At the Picture Show*, 41.

43 See the photograph of the Lubin Theater in Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, *Celebrate Richmond Theater* (Richmond: Dietz, 2001), 26.

44 See the photograph of the Electric Theater in Fuller, *At the Picture Show*, 54.

45 See "Will Close 5c Theaters," *Variety*, October 6, 1906, 5.

46 See the *Oswego* [NY] *Palladium*, August 30, 1909, 1.

47 See "Cut out Lurid Posters," *Variety*, September 16, 1911, 12.

48 "*World* Starts Crusade," *Variety*, October 1, 1910, 18.

49 See *New York Clipper*, December 21, 1912, 6.

50 F. H. Richardson, *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 23 (June 11, 1910): 987, reprinted in Waller, *Moviegoing in America*, 68–9.

51 See Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); and Shelly Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Film Culture after the Nickelodeon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

52 "Whose Hands," *Moving Picture World* 25, no. 4 (July 24, 1915): 623.

53 Ernest A. Dench, *Motion Picture Education* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1917), 102–4.

54 See "Posters Cause Comment," *Moving Picture World* 25, no. 5 (July 31, 1915): 836.

55 "The Poster End," *Moving Picture World* 5, no. 22 (November 27, 1909): 750.

56 *Moving Picture World* 23, no. 13 (March 27, 1915): (n.p.), quoted in Q. David Bowers, "The Island of Mystery," *Thanhouser Films: An Encyclopedia and History*, section "*$20 Million Dollar Mystery*," episode 17 (Portland: Thanhouser Preservation Associates, 1997), CD-ROM .

57 See *Moving Picture World* 25, no. 4 (July 24, 1915): 687; see also the article on motion picture poster history at http://www.learnaboutmovieposters.com/newsite/index/countries/us/history/history.asp; accessed November 28, 2010.

22

Bound by Cinematic Chains

Film and Prisons during the Early Era

Alison Griffiths

While New York City, along with Chicago, may be considered one of the key hubs of the early American motion picture industry, with hundreds of storefront theaters serving a new popular audience, thirty miles up the Hudson River, in the small town of Ossining, New York, a separate system of film exhibition culture was taking shape within the infamous Sing Sing prison. The fact that in 1914 one could sit in the Sing Sing chapel and watch the same theatrical film comedy or popular melodrama currently playing before Manhattan audiences, perhaps seated next to a "lifer" who may have never seen motion pictures before, underscores how the experience and historical meaning of film viewing are profoundly shaped by the exhibition context.[1] My goal in this chapter is to construct a more nuanced account of silent cinema spectatorship by considering how film first entered the penitentiary before 1915 and what this means for our understanding of early non-theatrical exhibition. Both American cinema and the movement known as the "new penology" came of age between 1900 and 1920, inviting an inquiry into the fascinating ways in which they informed one another.

I begin by examining some of the earliest instances of film being shown in US prisons, followed by a case study of cinema's emergence at the infamous Sing Sing prison north of New York City and a brief discussion of the role of gender in cinema's early history in the penitentiary. From an examination of the archival record, Sing Sing was a vibrant space of popular entertainment beyond cinema, including boxing, football (with its

famous “Black Sheep” football team), and vaudeville acts (Houdini, a personal friend of Lewis E. Lawes, Sing Sing’s warden from 1920 to 1941, both performed and screened his films there). Motion picture companies, including Vitagraph, Fox, Metro, and Paramount, loaned hundreds of films to the prison. Cinemagoing was integrated into the complex daily routines of this public institution, routines governed by the need to control large numbers of incarcerated men and built upon a long history of pre-cinematic entertainments such as lectures, concerts, performances, and sports.

More specifically, as part of this transvaluation of early cinema spectatorship I will explore the following questions: how did cinema confirm or undermine disciplinary or penal authority, and what determinative weight should be placed on the prison as exhibition venue? How did film in prison comport with pre-cinematic entertainments already in place? What was the rationale for showing film inside prisons? Who chose what the prisoners viewed, and how and where did the films fit into the institution’s disciplinary apparatus? Did cinema help build community within the prison and what kinds of affective habits did prison spectatorship engender? And, finally, what can this case study around motion pictures and prisons tell us about the nature of cinema spectatorship when so many of filmgoing’s public protocols were either eschewed or transformed in the prison? Experiencing cinema under the veil of punishment is hardly a commonplace occurrence, and while we can’t fully grasp the intersubjective complexities of groups of men and women viewing film under the watchful eye of guards who are themselves *de facto* spectators, this chapter can at least consider the history of non-theatrical cinema in the unlikeliest of venues.

This chapter paints a multifaceted portrait of filmgoing and fan culture, reading the experience as much against the grain as with it, borrowing anthropologist Anne Laura Stoler’s metaphor of the historical watermark to recapture the experiences of inmates watching film in prison.[2] While traces of what cinema inside was like, for either a guard or an inmate, can sometimes be found in the archive, and of course is retrievable to some extent in contemporary instances of inmates attending film screenings while incarcerated, the historical experience, especially when the motion picture industry was still nascent, is a bit like a watermark, permanently inscribed

but not immediately obvious. Reconstructing a "thick description" of cinema in prison – which films were viewed, where they came from, and how cinema fit into the institution's daily rhythms – is an exercise that involves imagining that "what might be [is] as important as knowing what *was*."[3] With this in mind, let us begin by journeying into the entertainment world of the incarcerated.

Film Spectatorship in Prison: The Early Years

> From the Oldest lifer to the latest arrival, they sat in the dark hall of the prison … and enjoyed a bill comprised [of] the very best films and vaudeville numbers. (*Hartford Courant*, 1914)[4]

In 1901, several years before the earliest reference to inmate screenings in New York State, the *Star of Hope* (Figure 22.1) (called the *Star Bulletin* from 1916 onwards), an inmate-written magazine published at Sing Sing from 1899 to 1920, featured a cover story entitled "Reformed by a Picture." The article was a morality tale told by an inmate of Clinton Prison (in upstate New York) about a friend and former Sing Sing prisoner who reformed after seeing Edison's 1895 Kinetoscope film *The Execution of Mary Queen of Scots* sometime in the late 1890s:

Figure 22.1 Masthead of *Star of Hope* published at Sing Sing prison, December 1899.

> Small things have changed the course of many of our lives, and, by some mysterious power influenced us for good and evil. A kinetoscope is an innocent looking piece of machinery and one would hardly credit it with the reformation of the crook, but it did. One of its pictures, projected upon a square of canvas in the city of Columbus, Ohio … was the means by which a notorious crook was made to realize his position.… It was as thorough a conversion as I have ever witnessed. That little picture accomplished more in five minutes than all of his term in prison did, or could ever accomplish, if he was incarcerated for the remainder of his natural life.[5]

The prisoner's elaborate account of the screening is fascinating not only for the prescient way in which it foregrounds cinema's role as a moral reformer, but for the inmate's extraordinary recall of the minute details of the film. Despite misremembering its length at five minutes instead of an elliptical twenty seconds, the lengthy description compensates for the fact that few of the *Star of Hope*'s readers would have ever seen motion pictures let alone this film. The painstaking detail is also a writerly move designed to underscore the emotion of the public execution.[6] The decapitation at the end of *The Execution of Mary Queen of Scots*, an early example of stop-camera photography, left both men deeply moved: "the execution was done so quickly that it rendered me speechless. Turning to my friend, I saw his face was pale, and if his life depended upon it he could not of [*sic*] spoken one word. When he recovered from the shock he turned to me and said: 'That was meant for me, and I'm going to heed the warning'."[7] Combining the shock factor of the early cinema of attractions with the literal shock of seeing Queen Mary's head suddenly roll to the ground, *Mary Queen of Scots* delivered a gut-wrenching reminder of the irreversibility of execution (her actual execution in 1587 was not nearly as swift, with accounts suggesting it took at least two attempts to sever her head). Although a reconstruction, the film was the closest thing to seeing an actual execution these two men had ever witnessed, and the visceral effect of seeing the Queen's head tumble to the ground in a communication medium barely four years old must have been striking.

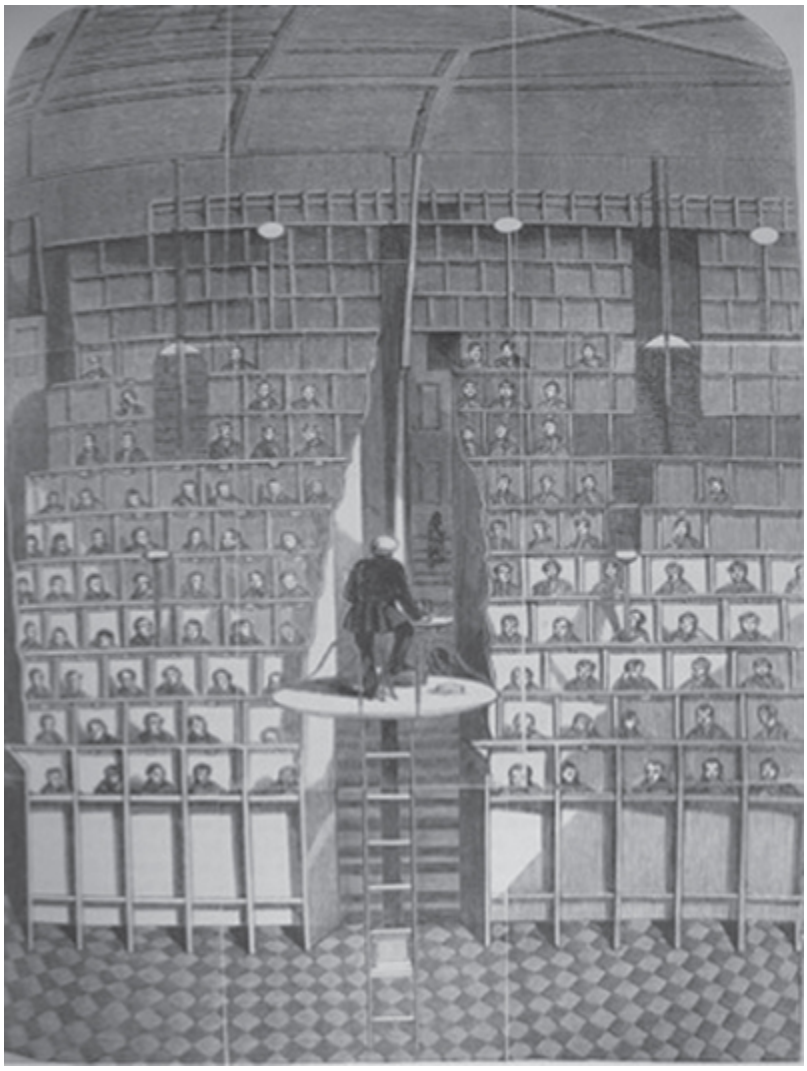
This parable about *The Execution of Mary Queen of Scots*' reformative power adumbrates cinema's role within an optic of execution that long predates motion pictures (woodcuts published in broadsides and photographs satisfied an audience's desire for images of public execution long before motion pictures).[8] Such filmic spectacles also created a unique spectatorial entry point for those inmates on death row who faced the prospect of electrocution. Incarcerated at a prison where executions were part of the grisly cycle of men exhausting the appeals process and being scheduled to die, this film hit a raw nerve as a reminder of the fate awaiting those on death row. According to the inmate's account, the reformed criminal gave away a roll of bills to a female beggar and her children and turned his back on crime, becoming a respected citizen.

The earliest account I have found of film being shown *in* a prison is from a fall 1907 edition of the *Washington Post*, which described the aftermath of moving pictures exhibited at Western Penitentiary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. With the intriguing title "Convicts Hiss Chaplain," the article described the increased security required in the prison chapel as an anti-riot precaution after the motion pictures that had previously been shown on Sunday afternoons were replaced by hymn singing. The reason for the suspension of screenings was described as follows: "More than a month ago permission was given by the penitentiary authorities for the exhibition of some so-called religious pictures in a moving-picture machine in the chapel. The operator got hold of the wrong films and treated the convicts to some pictures of bathing resorts for girls. That ended the motion picture."[9]

We can glean several things about the nature of filmgoing in the prison from this account: the venue (a chapel); the time (Sunday afternoon); official supervision of the content of the films shown (mild stag films substituted deliberately or inadvertently for religious films); and concern over the short- and long-term impact of cinema on prisoner morality and discipline. Programmed in a similar fashion to a children's Sunday school meeting, the decision to exhibit religious films to prisoners in the prison chapel (the logical space to accommodate large groups with minimum disruption) can be viewed as a safe foray into motion pictures for the institution. Despite its sanctified status, however, the prison chapel was paradoxically one of the more risky spaces where breaches of conduct were

routine; indeed, under the “separate system” introduced in the United Kingdom in the mid-nineteenth century, which prohibited prisoners from speaking to one another, the chapel pews seen in Figure 22.2 were modified through the addition of partial screens to prevent the men from seeing or communicating with one another and to assist the officers on duty with the task of surveillance.

Figure 22.2 “Separate System” in chapel at Surrey House of Corrections, Wandsworth, UK, 1852.



The separate system was largely a failure, and, as the authors of the 1852 prison survey pointed out, daily chapel attendance “may be termed the golden period of the day to most of them; for it is here, by holding their books to their faces and pretending to read with the chaplain, that they can

carry on the most uninterrupted conversation."[10] It is also worth mentioning that the only other time people sat on pews at Sing Sing was as witnesses to an electrocution, seen in Figure 22.3 in a reverse angle of the death chamber showing the seating for the twelve witnesses (mandated by New York state law); the spittoon, for those with weak stomachs, looks a bit like a collection tray, although in this instance it was the contents of stomachs and not money that flowed. While a great deal could obviously be said about how the social experience of cinema was affected by the chapel as an exhibition site within a larger penal context, and the extent to which film screenings occasioned unsanctioned behavior, any pronouncements on the irony of showing (potentially sacrilegious) popular amusement must be tempered by the fact that the chapel has always been a highly adaptable space.[11] Moreover, when chapels are integrated into larger institutional structures such as airports or hospitals, their meaning is shaped not only by the informing context of their surroundings but also by the motivation for attending. Thinking through some of these qualifiers can suggest how prisoners might have made sense of watching film in the chapel, where habits of displaying respect and proper decorum might, at least in the mind of the prison authorities if not in actuality, have been automatically transferred from the religious to the secular context.

Figure 22.3 Pews for twelve witnesses in Sing Sing's Death House showing electric chair and spittoon, ca. 1920s.

These two early accounts of film in the penitentiary suggest the differences between viewing film in a theatrical setting versus non-theatrical spaces such as schools, churches, museums, clubs, or prisons. While some exhibition practices are similar across these sites, there was something unique about going to the movies behind bars. One of the most obvious features was the fact that attendance at prison screenings, like those in schools, was coercive rather than elective, unless an inmate was too sick to go to a screening and was in the prison hospital. Despite being inseparable from the larger disciplinary apparatus, filmgoing was egalitarian, free (which particularly annoyed the "anti-coddlers" who opposed the prison reform movement of the time), and united the prisoner community around a shared experience, doubtless spawning conversations about the films. At Indiana State Prison in 1911, films were shown immediately after military drills, the prison authorities regimenting and disciplining the incarcerated body *before* exposing it to cinema, almost as a way of inoculating the prisoner against the potential deleterious effect of film or using it as a reward after the ordeal of the drills.[12] Both drills and cinemagoing relieved the dull routine of convict life and, in theory, kept the

prisoners in compliance with prison regulations; according to Warden E. J. Fogarty, “the subjects are to be religious in character, with an occasional comic film that is clean and bright.”[13] One would imagine, however, that cinema was nowhere near as effective as military drills, and the risk of raucous or dangerous behavior under the conditions necessary for cinema – a darkened space in order to view the image and a large group of assembled men – must have served as a deterrent to the introduction of motion pictures in some prisons. And if we can learn anything from the historical record about prisoner behavior in chapel, it is that these spaces simply increased the likelihood of infractions of prison rules such as passing contraband around, plotting, or more seriously, executing an escape.

The poignant figure of the inmate spectator who first encountered cinema within the penitentiary attracted the attention of journalists and others in the early twentieth century. At Joliet prison in Illinois in 1912, for example, a lifer told Warden E. J. Murphy: “I didn’t know their wuz [*sic*] such things,” referring both to the cinematic apparatus and to the racing car, airplane, and submarine depicted on the screen. The idea of the initiate spectator so late into cinema’s transitional era, along with the idea of cinema as metaphoric escape for the prisoners, were popular tropes in prisoner and journalistic accounts of early cinema, although everything prisoners were reported to say about cinema was censored by the prison authorities and filtered by the sensibilities of investigating journalists. The lifer at Joliet, for example, described prison time transformed by the experience of watching motion pictures, since these weren’t ordinary minutes but “deliriously happy” ones, “thirty minutes of freedom,” where “glimpses of various bits of science which many of the men had never seen, flashes of European scenery, American skyscrapers, and other strange things whirled before the child-like audience.”[14] Cinema was doubly hailed as a benevolent force in these accounts, bringing a ray of light (literally) into the lives of the inmates and reminding readers of cinema’s unsurpassed capacity for virtual travel. Nor surprisingly, the prisoner audience was often infantilized in a manner consistent with the othering of so-called vulnerable groups such as women, children, and people of color.

Indeed, the theme of the first-time moviegoer behind bars was ubiquitous. In 1913 the *Atlanta Constitution* ran an excerpt from the prisoner

publication *Good Words*, written by a prisoner-reporter who sat between two lifers experiencing cinema for the first time in a federal prison (former sailors, one had been inside since 1880, the other since 1897). "'Why, it's just like you was lookin' at folks!'" said one of the men. That cinema's belated appearance behind bars should have attracted the interest of journalists writing during the early cinema period should come as no surprise; to this day, how prison authorities negotiate what parts of the modern world prisoners have access to is newsworthy, as seen in a 2011 *New York Times* article about the large number of letters written by inmates to the editors of men's magazines (coined "jail mail") and their very limited internet access.[15] As constructed by the press, filmgoing in the penitentiary takes on the feel of a social experiment, in which the prisoners serve as guinea pigs for testing the impact of motion pictures on naïve spectators. The sense of glee in these accounts seems premised both upon the idea of incongruity – the films versus their reception context – *and* the idea that the venue might alter the perceptual experience of cinema, that prisoners might in fact *see* something different by dint of their incarceration.

Another feature of prison film spectatorship is its homosociality, a phenomenon that undoubtedly shaped the meanings of the heterosexual dramas projected on the screen and the rituals attending motion picture exhibition where, outside of prison, men often went to the movies with their wives or girlfriends (although younger men probably went mostly with peers as they do today). And while access to images of women greatly increased when commercial releases started appearing in prisons by the mid 1910s, we shouldn't forget that cinema complemented rather than replaced pre-cinematic entertainments in prisons that had routinely included women, such as Mrs. Field's Bible Class at Sing Sing, which began in 1890.

Cinemagoing at Sing Sing: The Emergence of Film Culture Behind Bars

> Watch the play of expressions on our faces when the machine is in action, and if we do not convince you that we are grateful nothing else would. (Sing Sing Prisoner, 1915)[16]

Despite its size and proximity to New York City, Sing Sing was not one of the first penitentiaries in the United States to show moving pictures; in fact, its sister New York state prison in Clinton got a Power No. 6A projector (donated by the Auburn Film Company) six months earlier and started a regular Sunday screening series.[17] The first exhibition of motion pictures at Sing Sing, a prison that opened in 1826 to replace Newgate Prison in New York City, was in October 1914, around the time that many other prisons began to show film. The conditions for showing film at Sing Sing were established long before the first projector was delivered to its chapel screening room, however; as in many other public institutions, what allowed film to gain a foothold were pre-cinematic initiatives that performed similar institutional functions to film, including the prison library, which opened in 1848 under the stewardship of librarian Chaplain John Lucky. In addition to the library, prisoners enjoyed (or not as the case may be) "Sunday religious services, Bible class, [lectures by members of] the Volunteer Prisoner's League, and other uplifting influences," all of which led the way for organized sports and motion pictures.[18]

In this context, lectures delivered by public religious figures and prison-reformers were a regular occurrence at Sing Sing and other prisons. One of the most frequent and popular visitors was the English-born Maude Ballington Booth, also known as Little Mother, who founded the Volunteer Prison League and made her first appearance at Sing Sing on May 24, 1896, when she was invited by Warden Omar V. Sage to conduct a chapel service. From prisoner accounts of her visit, Mrs. Booth mesmerized the convict population, not merely because of her gender and physical appearance (she was described as a "petite, modest-looking little woman in a shovel bonnet"): "The chapel seemed to be aflame with restlessness, appreciative of the presence again of *one* whom they have learnt to love and revere."[19] Doubling up as the prison's town hall, the chapel had a long history of igniting excitement in the prison population, and not primarily because of the religious services that were held there.

Another vital force in the prison reform movement was Thomas Mott Osborne, who had posed as prisoner Tom Brown to witness first hand the abuse of prisoners at Auburn Prison and helped the penal community organize into union-style groups. In 1914 Osborne became warden of Sing Sing and replaced the prison's Golden Rule Brotherhood with the Mutual Welfare League (MWL) whose responsibilities, according to Warden Lewis E. Lawes, who took over the reigns of Sing Sing six years after Osborne's hiring, were as follows: to "have charge of recreation on the field and in the chapel … to provide musical entertainments, arrange the schedule of moving pictures, engage in whatever social welfare work that was called to its attention by prisoners on behalf of their dependents; in fact, all extra-administrative demands of a community such as the prisoner population is [*sic*] represented."[20] The MWL ran the *Star of Hope* and elected an Entertainment Committee Chairman whose job it was to procure films and schedule screenings. The MWL also sponsored other prisoner welfare initiatives at Sing Sing, such as fundraising for the family members of the-incarcerated and the annual show.

Of course, long before cinema was a mainstay of entertainments organized for inmates, prisoners wrote about using their imaginations to escape the drudgery and tedium of confinement, or what one inmate in 1899 referred to as building "air castles." According to Auburn number 25,551: "It is when we build 'air castles' with the eyes shut that our mental vision is clearest.… Distance is overcome so easily that thought may be one moment in America, the next in Europe.… We may cross the wildest mountain passes, span the broadest desserts.… What a wonderful journey, how cheap, how enjoyable, how free.… And all this journey can be mentally made in a single hour."[21] Reminiscent of an early cinema travelogue and poignantly acknowledging the large immigrant make-up of the prisoner population (roughly 40 percent by the early 1900s), this description of the mental castles seems aware of the fact that immigrant prisoners would have vivid memories of what the old world looked like.[22] Mentally constructing "air castles" was a way, therefore, of bringing the large and expansive into the small and confined, as the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard argues in his discussion of the miniature in *The Poetics of Space*:

> How many times poet-painters, in their prisons, have broken through walls, by way of a tunnel! How many times, as they painted their dreams, they have escaped through a crack in the wall! And to get out of prison all means are good ones. If need be, mere absurdity can be a source of freedom.[23]

Gendering the imagination, Kierkegaard compares the relative quiet of the daytime mind, like a "diligent maid who sits quietly all day at her work," to a force that upon the fall of darkness becomes more active, more dangerous, and "can speak so prettily for me that I just have to look at it even if it isn't always landscapes or flowers or pastoral idylls she paints."[24]

Jack London's 1915 novel *The Jacket*, published under the title *The Star Rover* in the US, is an extraordinary take on the air-castle theme. In it, convicted murderer and former professor of agronomics Darrell Standing is strapped so tightly into a straitjacket as punishment for abusing the guards at San Quentin that he loses all sensation in his body and hallucinates time and space travel. Standing's out-of-body experiences can function as a metaphor for cinema's capacity to dissolve spatial and temporal barriers – the book opens with the line "All my life I have had awareness of other times and places" – and in chapter eleven, when Standing feels that his expanding brain has moved outside his skull, he recalls: "Time and space, in so far as they were the stuff of consciousness, underwent an enormous-extension. Thus, without opening my eyes to verify, I knew that the walls of my very narrow cell had receded until it was like a vast audience-chamber."[25]

Given such literary descriptions of the acute imaginations of individuals in prison, it is hard to overestimate just how excited the inmates of Sing Sing must have been seeing motion pictures for the first time in the prison chapel. The inmates did not learn of the motion picture screening until early in the morning of Saturday, October 17, 1914, a gray, rainy day with low-lying clouds over the Hudson River. Despondent at the prospect of spending the entire day locked inside because of the inclement weather, "all disposition to complain was removed" when the men learned that a "moving picture machine had arrived at Sing Sing and a 'show' would be given in the afternoon."[26] During the inaugural screening, seven reels were

projected in the chapel in two sittings, consisting mostly of Kalem comedies and Mack Sennett's *What the Doctor Ordered* (1912). After the final film, the projector was turned off to allow Chaplain Lucky to thank the individuals who had made the screening possible and to award Mr. E. R. Cass honorary membership in the Golden Rule Brotherhood.[27] A Miss Ella H. Davidson of New York City donated the motion picture projector along with enough films for three months' worth of weekly screenings. She made a guest appearance to thunderous applause at the second screening the following Sunday. Davidson was just one of many women active in organizations and benevolent societies who trumpeted the reform-movement and did their bit to improve the lives of the incarcerated. Indeed, it is tempting to read a great deal into the gendered connotations of this gift, and to have seen Miss Davidson walk into Sing Sing's chapel with the men cheering must surely have been an amazing sight. If we go along with the idea of cinema as a source of comfort to these men, then Miss Davidson might well be perceived as the Florence Nightingale of the effort to introduce motion pictures to one of the world's most notorious prisons.

Several protocols of the emergent model of theatrical film exhibition were modified in this and subsequent screenings at Sing Sing, imbuing the experience with something of an anachronistic feel, reminiscent of the early years of cinema's inclusion in the vaudeville program: first, the films were interrupted by musical performances, vaudeville acts, and occasionally speeches (for example, on October 24, 1914, live musical performances of songs about distant loved ones and the plight of an aching heart were interspersed between the films); second, the price of admission was "not a Broadway price [but] simply a decent regard for the rules by which we are all governed."[28] The commercial underpinnings of cinema were negated, since no money was required for admission (instead, attendance was contingent on good behavior both prior to and during the screening); and third, the newsworthiness of the screening provoked prisoner commentary in the weekly *Star of Hope*, inscribing the distinct pleasures of motion pictures within an informal institutional memory.

And so began the tradition of showing films at Sing Sing, a ritual involving "700 or more of us sit[ting] in the chapel watching the pictures, instinct with life, that are thrown up on the screen and listening between the

reels, usually six in number, to the very excellent music, both vocal and instrumental."[29] Within three weeks of the inaugural screening, the *Star of Hope* had established a weekly column (the first was on November 7, 1914) reviewing the entertainments under the column "At the Movies." Holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas were no longer the only times of year when special entertainment and improved food were available; motion pictures soon became a weekly occurrence, sometimes more frequently, depending on the availability of films.

The introduction of motion pictures into the prison undoubtedly added ammunition to those critics who, already skeptical of cinema's supposed role in lowering moral standards among the general public, felt prisons should be places of unrelenting punishment rather than spaces of entertainment. Yet the idea of yoking one insalubrious institution with another is suggested by the case of Sing Sing, where one of the rationales for the evening and weekend screenings was to prevent inmates from engaging in sex after doubling up in cells become the norm during the 1890s. The other reason for film screenings was to get the prisoners out of their damp cells, where at the end of the nineteenth century they spent three quarters of the day. Living in cells that measured seven feet long, six and a half feet wide, and six feet high (just 168 cubic feet of air, not including the air space taken up by furniture, far below the minimum of 400 specified by the New York Board of Health), prisoners frequently contracted pulmonary, upper respiratory, and dermatological diseases.

Notwithstanding the prison authority's desire to use cinema to (attempt to) stave off sexual activity and ill-health, cinema could also be utilized for ideological purposes, inculcating American values and keeping as many as fifteen hundred men docile for the duration of the film program (there were always two screenings at Sing Sing to accommodate the nearly 1,500 inmates). The self-governance of the Mutual Welfare League (MWL) was publicly credited in the pages of the *Star of Hope* "for the order and fine discipline which is being maintained in the chapel," and Sunday film screenings gave the men a much-needed break from their cells where they would otherwise have spent an inordinate amount of time over a typical weekend. The Chairman of the Entertainment Committee was routinely thanked in the *Star of Hope* for obtaining donated films from such

production companies as Vitagraph, which regularly supplied films for the inmates.[30] But how did the prison authorities feel about prisoners watching virtually the same line-up of films as their free brethren? And surely the endemic moral panic about the negative effects of film on so-called vulnerable groups must have applied to those who were already on the wrong side of the law? (Or perhaps the stakes were lower because they were considered beyond redemption?)

I have come across no discussion of censorship of films by the prison authorities or the MWL, although this is not to say that some titles were rejected. The most obvious reason for this is Hollywood's role as an effective conduit for ideologically sanctioned narratives, that despite charges of glamorizing criminals and their lifestyles, drove home the message that crime seldom paid (the case of *Alias Jimmy Valentine* discussed below validates this). Less than five months after the inaugural screening at Sing Sing, a nascent motion picture culture was established at the prison; films were being shown on a regular basis, inmates had access to home-grown film criticism in the *Star of Hope*, and film studios began shooting on location at Sing Sing, including Maurice Tourneur's 1915 *Alias Jimmy Valentine*, which featured actual prison drills. The experience of watching *Alias Jimmy Valentine* at Sing Sing became an act of self-witnessing for the 1,700 inmates, as the prison's *Star of Hope* reviewer put it: "The play was full of action and the scenes were very realistic, especially those laid in Sing Sing.… And of the companies of men marching through the yard to the mess hall were men – scores of men – who sat in the audience viewing the pictures, and, of course, they and their comrades had no trouble identifying them."[31] Being in prison and recognizing yourself on the screen must have been a bizarre experience, triggering an existential jolt about the reality of the situation. And even though the men purportedly cheered loudly when Warden Osborne appeared in the opening shot of the film, several of them lower their heads and tip their caps to conceal their identity as they march before the camera. Resembling a "perp walk" where arrested individuals are paraded from the police precinct to a waiting car before the assembled news media, Tourneur's footage of Sing Sing prisoners doing their drills is redolent with layers of signification, especially when we factor in the film's exhibition at the prison. While seeing yourself

on screen in the company of fellow inmates might have lessened the embarrassment of being identified as a convicted criminal, being seen by family members, friends, or future employees outside the institution was a different kettle of fish.

The motion picture industry was quick to exploit the prisoners' new status as film fans, with Carl Laemmle of the Universal Film Company launching a contest to find the best name for an untitled film tragedy, which premiered at Sing Sing in February 1915 (the winning convict would receive $50). This publicity stunt quickly spawned imitators, including another film company offer of a prize of the same amount for the best "scenario written and submitted by any 'guest' in warden Thomas Mott Osborne's 'detention home' up the Hudson." According to the *New York Tribune*, "the winning scenario will be produced in Sing Sing before being released. Comedies, dramas or melodramas are available but 'biographies' are barred."[32]

By 1927, films were shown to Sing Sing inmates living in the original brick cell house at 10:00 p.m. every single night of the week, as F. Raymond Daniel reported in the *New York Evening Post*: "They have movies every night but that's just to get out of the unhealthy cells. The three hundred men in the new sanitary block are not allowed to go to the show."[33] The prisoners were offered the choice of staying in their damp cells and watching film every night or relocating to new, dry cells and seeing films on Tuesdays and Fridays. The *New York Times* quoted Lawes as saying that "contrary to general belief, nightly shows were given not primarily to entertain the prisoners, but rather to keep them out of the insanitary, stone cells, most of which have been abolished."[34] As ways of mitigating damp cells and sexual activity, the screening of films at Sing Sing put an intriguing spin on the moral panic about cinema's corrupting influence. In the prison at least, representations of sexual activity on screen were tame compared to what went on off-screen, and while concern about homosexual relationships had been voiced for a very long time (and was a factor in Sing Sing reformist warden Thomas Mott Osborne's resignation after he was accused in 1916 of having sex with several prisoners), it is striking that cinema should be employed in the fight against them.[35] But if men's status as film spectators in prisons received validation from both the

MWL and the emerging film industry, can the same be said about women in penitentiaries or reformatories? It is to the situation affecting women prisoners that we now turn in the penultimate section of this chapter.

Reform and the Female Prisoner: Uplift and Knowing One's Place

> Many a poor girl is in prison just because she had faith in the spoutings of some empty-headed idiot with more wind than brains. (State Prison for Women, Auburn prisoner number 321, 1901)

One of Sing Sing's lesser-known claims to fame is that it housed the first separate women's prison in the United States, Mount Pleasant Female Prison, which opened in 1839 and continued to accommodate female inmates until 1877.[36] While space precludes a detailed discussion of the double standard to which women were held as law breakers, it is worth noting that behavior that would have gone virtually unnoticed in men was criminalized in the case of women; failure to conform to standards of female propriety came at a very steep price, and as prison historian Lucia Zedner argues, the "lack of concern, or worse, systematic exploitation meant that women often endured much poorer conditions than men convicted of similar offences."[37] Beginning in the 1870s, the women's reformatory movement, which modeled itself on juvenile reform, aimed at creating what historian Nicole Hahn Rafter calls a set of "feminized penal practices" that eschewed the model of the nineteenth-century brick prison in favor of cottage-style dwellings located around a central administrative building, far away from the "city's demoralizing influences." Women were sometimes sentenced to these reformatories for longer periods of time than men, since reformers believed that a change of morals could take years.[38] For the most part, though, women often received shorter sentences than men, since they "came before the court for the most trivial offenses of drunkenness, disorderly conduct, prostitution and petty theft."[39] A powerful group of women was pivotal in spearheading the reform movement in the United States in the last quarter of the nineteenth century,

including the formation of the American Prison Association in 1870. Between 1870 and 1935, twenty reformatories were established in the United States, founded upon the argument that women alone should be responsible for their day-to-day management.[40]

Despite these changes, closer examination of the kinds of leisure activities available to female inmates versus male prisoners reveals inequities, including the fact that in New York state prisons, film took much longer to reach institutions where women were incarcerated than magic lantern slides and musical and dramatic entertainments. Researching the *Star of Hope*, which includes information on entertainment and educational activities for women housed at the New York State's Women's Prison in Auburn, it seems that motion pictures were not shown in the tail end of the early cinema period (1914–15), even though they had appeared in male penitentiaries. Describing an evening's entertainment in early December 1914, female prisoner number 876 wrote, "We have not been so fortunate as our brothers on the other side of the wall [who] are more up to date with their moving pictures. Still we have enjoyed our magic lantern pictures [of the life of Christ] very much."[41] For this woman, the inequity is framed in terms of modernity, the men simply being "more up to date" and the women less likely to be on the receiving end of modern technology. The complaint falls short of engaging more deeply with the unfairness and even places a positive spin on the fact that women still have their lantern slides, albeit religious subjects that were akin to the kinds of shows put on for Sunday school children.

While I have yet to uncover any official explanation as to why Auburn's Women's Prison did not show films in the mid to late 1910s, one can speculate about several possible reasons for the decision to deprive women inmates of motion pictures: the first is that women were considered more susceptible to the moral corruption associated with the fledgling motion picture industry, and as a doubly othered constituency (female and criminal), the stakes were simply too high. In fact, motion pictures were singled out as causal factors in women's downfall, so showing them in prisons at this time was probably unthinkable for most superintendents and matrons. In light of the double standards imposed upon female prisoners and the high value attached to morality for women – in the nineteenth-

century prison “mark system,” for example, men were rewarded for diligence and productivity, while female inmates, as Zedner notes, earned marks for “good conduct, honesty, propriety, and ‘moral improvement’” – it is no surprise that film was viewed with some suspicion.[42] Given the emphasis upon “ ‘softening’ and ‘civilizing’ ” female inmates, film might have come with too much cultural baggage, and was perceived as useless in the fight against moral turpitude.[43] In the less rigidly disciplined environment of the female prison, film might have had less of a crucial role to play as a disciplinary agent; in reformatories, it was the (always married) female warden, as Zedner explains, who maintained order by “setting a personal example, gaining the trust of prisoners, and instilling a sense of loyalty.”[44] Given the complex interplay of interpersonal relationships at women’s reformatories and the heavy emphasis placed on the modeling of good behavior and the sanctioning of even the smallest infringements, cinema might have fit less comfortably in the larger disciplinary schema.

Second, when we factor in that the Chairman of the Entertainment Committee of the MWL was responsible for acquiring films, might have been easier for men on the MWL’s Entertainment Committee to reach out to distributors and exhibitors for the loan of prints than women who were less likely to have worked or moved within this social network. Still, in most instances, films were offered free of charge to prisons such as Sing Sing, so it is quite possible that the inmates at the Women’s Prison at Auburn in 1914 were offered film and even a projector at the same time as the men over the wall but the prison authorities declined. Finally, in an all-female environment save maintenance employees, it may have been less likely that someone was able or willing to operate a projector and organize reel changes during a film screening (in contrast to a lantern slide show where the lecturer was in charge of logistics), although I have not come across any references to this being a factor, and, as Haidee Wasson points out, operating instructions would have been standard with most portable projectors after the introduction of 16 mm in the early 1920s.[45]

Women housed in reformatories did eventually get to see motion pictures; on one occasion, when a screening was promised to the female prison population but then denied, the ensuing riot was reported in the *New York*

Times, describing events that took place at the Reformatory for Women in Bedford, New York on New Year's Night 1920. Learning from Warden Henrietta Hoffman that they were not going to be allowed to attend a promised moving picture show, the women "began to scream and shout and varied this by smashing furniture and banging their iron beds up and down the floor. The din became so loud that the reserve guards and matrons were summoned."[46] The prisoners' angry reaction to the loss of the filmgoing privilege suggests the high stakes of the screening and recalls an early period of female incarceration from the 1850s and 1860s when, as Zedner points out, "women's extreme frustration with the monotonous prison regime continued to lead to dramatic outbursts of anger and destruction."[47]

We can detect a contradiction, then, in the idea of women as docile subjects, susceptible to moral conversion on the one hand and their reputation as unruly when provoked to anger on the other, a view premised on the sexist notion that women could not control their violent passions and were more irrational and hysterical than their male counterparts. In the words of Arthur Griffiths, deputy governor of Millbank Prison in London in the 1850s, "they are far more persistent in their evil ways, more outrageously violent, less amenable to reason or reproof."[48] This belief is quite widespread in the historical record, explained in part by the fact that women were engaged in less productive work than men while incarcerated. This might account for why some women acted out as a result of boredom and frustration; for repeat offenders, there was little to be lost in occasionally causing a ruckus. Of course, it was a different story entirely for the women housed in male penitentiaries, who saw the same films as the male convicts, often in mixed-sex screenings; for the Fourth of July holiday in 1914, for example, 638 male and female prisoners watched moving pictures together at Connecticut State Prison, marching to the chapel in pairs, with the women taking their seats before the male prisoners.[49] The excitement and sexual tension that must have ensued from watching motion pictures in the same physical space as the opposite sex, even in a place of worship, was bound to mark these as very special occasions for the prisoners (and they were just that, taking place on Independence Day or at Thanksgiving rather than weekly). The anticipation alone of watching a

film in the company of men – a memory from the outside suddenly invoked – must have generated a great deal of excitement, and while all eyes were supposedly on the screen under the watchful eye of presumably male and female guards, there must have been some head turning, as any teenage memory of going to the movies will attest.

For the most part, though, women in single-sex prisons and reformatories had to make the best of the leisure activities offered them, such as the dancing lessons introduced at Auburn Prison for Women in summer 1916. While men at Auburn watched films such as Harry Leverage's *The Girl and the Gangster* (1916), the women inmates were offered the more refined experience of listening to the sisters of St. Aloysius Convent accompanied by young boys and girls. If prisoner number 914's response to the singing is anything to go by, the show triggered maternal longings among several of the women: "Many of *us* have little children of our own.… Did the scene mean that we try for their sakes to help one another while here, to become better women and a credit to those awaiting our return to that haven of rest, home? Yes."[50] This reflection on sacrifice, motherhood, and cooperative reform is especially significant when we consider that its readership consisted not only of other women housed in the same institution but the men incarcerated in the New York State prisons who received the magazine, as well as civilian subscribers. Given the overt censorship of the *Star of Hope*, it is hardly surprising that such comforting reflections made it into print, but it is interesting nevertheless that a performance, rather than a lecture, religious sermon, or printed book, served as a catalyst for such thoughtful reflection on the reformative value of wholesome amusements.

"An Education in Americanism": Concluding Thoughts

As institution, practice, experience, ritual, and disciplinary tool, early cinema was an exceedingly slippery signifier in the prison: for conservative social commentators, it was a potent example of the untoward coddling of prisoners, whereas for penal reformers film had the potential to uplift,

reward, and inculcate American values. Writing in the *Star of Hope* in 1916, Great Meadows prisoner number 1964 addressed the utility of cinema as perceived by the outside world, prison authorities, and inmates: "To the world at large motion picture shows in prison have meant little more than the pampering of prisoners. Even the metropolitan papers … have complained at times that the honest man has to shed a nickel to see a 'movie' while a 'con' saw a two dollar feature for free."[51] Prisoner number 1964 also recognized the role of film in "amusing the prisoners, of helping to keep them contented without turning them out in the air and sunshine." Preoccupying this prisoner the most, however, was cinema's potential to instill American values among immigrant inmates: "A son of Italy enters the prison to pay for a statutory offense that is no crime in his land where women mature at an early age. The day after he enters, by using film, we can begin his education in Americanism. His education does not wait on the tediously acquired alphabet.… In six months he has learned more from the pictures than he could have learned from books in a sixteen-year sentence."[52] In a manner reminiscent of cinema's trumpeting by the industry, trade press, and progressives, the prisoner-author homes in on cinema's potential as an Americanizing force (while taking a mild swipe at the injustice of statutory laws). For Great Meadows number 1964, cinema is front and center in the reform process, the spectator "at the mercy of the mind which created the film." Moreover, via films that he calls "blessed messengers of discontent," defined as narratives with hard-luck characters who serve as negative role models, "you are in a position to make over your man, to inculcate in him, awaken in him, the mightiest of all forces, right desire, whose fruit is always CHARACTER."[53]

But how closely did cinema in prison replicate the social, cultural, and psychological experience of cinema as an increasingly mature and standardized industry in the early to mid 1910s? In terms of the ritualized aspects of filmgoing, there are several points of convergence and divergence, convergence insofar as the film text was the same as the one shown theatrically, but divergence with respect to pretty much everything else. And while we may never know what the nature of watching films in prison was like during the early cinema period, it is possible to construct a hierarchy of institutional use-value, with the maintenance of compliant

subjects somewhere near the top. The manner in which cinema was experienced differently in the penitentiary versus a motion picture theater or in non-theatrical venues such as churches, museums, or clubhouses thus depends on a range of social and psychological issues, a point that encourages us to think beyond the theatrical model of film spectatorship as the only true experience of cinema.

The *habitus* of filmgoing in prison, while a popular trope in countless Hollywood films showing prisoners gathered to watch films, is as complex as this sociological term itself, developed by Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu.[54] The habitus of filmgoing in prison can only be understood through a triangulated approach that locates moving pictures within a tradition of pre-cinematic entertainments and considers what the inmates were actually watching and how these films were reviewed or referenced in prisoner publications such as *Star of Hope* as well as in serious and popular journalism. It also requires searching for the fissures and cracks in all of these "sanctioned" accounts of film exhibition to find traces of the *experience*. When we refer to the escapism of cinema and speculate about what must have been going through the minds of the Sing Sing population when they watched Houdini perform his famous escape tricks or screen his movies, we are once again asked to rethink how spectatorship is resignified by the space of the prison. Inmate spectators were as complex and unknowable as the public film audience; they had taste preferences that were equally variegated and didn't all "love the movies" just because cinema was a break from their mind-numbing routine; when movies are part of the unchanging routine, even when they possess a diversionary quality, they are by no means isomorphic with the filmgoing experience of a free man or woman.

Ironically, in the modern prison, the din from constantly blaring televisions and radios drives some inmates crazy, since not only is peace and quiet hard to obtain, but, as Stateville, Illinois prisoner Sam Guttierez puts it, "the noise from competing radios and TV's in neighboring cells, particularly the rock and country music stations turned on full blast" is something he just can't get used to.[55] Radios and television (but very limited internet use) help distract and placate; they also bring the outside world into the prison, giving it a veneer of normalcy, as suggested in the

fact that Britain's HM Prison Service Prisoner Handbook has an image of a portable television on a small table in a cell on the web page, an icon of-reassurance to be sure.[56] At the same time, popular culture and the movies have always been markers of normalcy for the prison population, generating countless conversations in the exercise yard, workshop, and cell. "It was all the same and yet oh so different" would be how I'd characterize film in the prison, the same frames flickering through the projector at the same speed as in the theaters but in a unique space and context that most of us will never experience. As historians of early cinema, we can learn a great deal about cinemagoing at the margins by turning to peripheral, non-theatrical institutions such as prisons to do justice to the subtleties and vagaries of film spectatorship; film on the inside still counts as filmgoing, even if the journey traveled is steps away from where you reside.

Notes

1 First-run pictures were made available to the Sing Sing prison as a result of the cooperation between the Skouras Brothers distributors and Sing Sing's membership in the New York Film Board of Trade. See "These are Your N.Y. State Correctional Institutions," and "Sing Sing Prison," *Corrections* 14, no. 9 (August–September 1949): 8 and 15, respectively, in File no. 16, Correspondence 1931–71 General, Box no. 1 Lawes Supplementary Collection, Lewis E. Lawes Collection, John Jay College of Criminal Justice [hereafter abbreviated to LLC-JJC].

2 Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 8.

3 Stoler, *Archival Grain*, 21.

4 "Christmas Movies Delight Prisoners: Local Theater Manager and Two Actors at State Prison," *Hartford Courant*, December 26, 1914, 5. Warden Ward A. Garner had recently undertaken a number of reforms at the state prison in Connecticut, including lifting the ban on talking at meal times.

5 Clinton prisoner number 4,499, "Reformed by a Picture," *Star of Hope* 8, no. 18 (December 1901): 297–8.

6 According to Charles Musser, Mary was played by Robert Thomas, secretary and treasurer of the Kinetoscope Company. Despite the historical

subject matter and its stop-camera technique, the film did not generate large sales. Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990), 86–7.

7 4,499, "Reformed," 298.

8 Louis P. Masur, *Rites of Execution: Capital Punishment and the Transformation of American Culture, 1776–1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 26.

9 "Convicts Hiss Chaplain," *Washington Post*, October 14, 1907, 3.

10 Henry Mayhew and John Binny, *The Criminal Prisons of London and Scenes of Prison Life* (London: Griffin, Bohn & Company, 1852), 101.

11 Several scholars have researched motion picture exhibition in chapels during the early era, including Stephen Bottomore & Company, "Projecting for the Lord: The Work of Wilson Carlile," *Film History* 14, no. 2 (2002): 195–209; Dean R. Rapp, "A Baptist Pioneer: The Exhibition of Film to London's East End Working Classes, 1900–1918," *Baptist Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (2003): 6–21; Richard Abel, "From Peep Show to Picture Palace: The Early Exhibition of Motion Pictures," in *The Wiley-Blackwell History of American Film*, vol. 1, *Origins–1918*, eds. Cynthia Lucia, Roy Grundmann, and Art Simon (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); and Terry Lindvall, "Sundays in Norfolk: Toward a Protestant Utopia through Film Exhibition in Norfolk, Virginia, 1910–1920," in *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema*, eds. Richard Maltby, Melvyn Stokes, and Robert C. Allen (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), 76–98.

12 "Moving Pictures in Prison," *New York Times*, December 2, 1911, 8.

13 Ibid.

14 "Five Hundred Convicts See Outside World – 'By Movies'," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 4, 1912, 1.

15 Jeremy W. Peters, "To the Editor, in an Inmate's Hand," *New York Times*, January 8, 2011, B1 and B4. *Maxim* receives between ten and thirty letters a week and *Rolling Stone* at least one a day.

16 Unidentified Sing Sing prisoner quoted in "Notes Written on the Screen," *New York Times*, March 14, 1915, xii.

17 "Pictures for Prisoners," *Washington Post*, March 22, 1914, SM3.

18 Sing Sing prisoner number 312, “A Study in Criminology,” *Star of Hope* 1, no. 3 (May 1899): 1.

19 “The V.P.L. Day: Mrs. Booth Tendered an Enthusiastic Reception,” *Star of Hope* 1, no. 13 (October 7, 1899): 7.

20 Lewis E. Lawes, *Twenty Thousand Years in Sing Sing* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1932), 119.

21 Auburn prisoner number 25,551, “Mental Visions,” *Star of Hope* 1, no. 17 (December 1899): 2.

22 Denis Brian, *Sing Sing: The Inside Story of a Notorious Prison* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2005), 61.

23 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 150.

24 Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin, 2003), 63.

25 Jack London, *The Jacket* (London, 1915) published in the United States as *The Star Rover* (New York: Macmillan, 1915), 13 and 77–8. A Hollywood film partly based on the book directed by John Maybury and starring Adrien Brody and Keira Knightley was released in 2005.

26 “Sing Sing’s Movies: Inaugurating the Golden Rule Brotherhood’s New Machine,” *Star of Hope* 16, no. 12 (October 1914): 178.

27 Ibid.

28 “The Movies,” *Star of Hope* 16, no. 13 (November 1914): 198.

29 Ibid.

30 See “*The Lights of New York* (Van Dyke Brooke, Vitagraph, 1916),” *Star of Hope* 16, no. 8 (December 1916): 32 and “*The Man Behind the Curtain* (C. J. Van Deusen, Vitagraph, 1916),” *Star of Hope* 18, no. 5 (September 1916): 18, for references to prison order in the chapel.

31 *Star of Hope* 16, no. 20 (February 1915): 313. *Alias Jimmy Valentine* was shown on Saturday, February 14, 1915.

32 “‘Valentine’ Film at Sing Sing: Motion Pictures of Well Known Play Please Convict Audience,” *New York Tribune*, February 16, 1915, 9.

33 F. Raymond Daniel, “Sing Sing’s Pampering Done in Tiny, Damp Cells,” *New York Evening Post*, February 26, 1927.

34 “Sing Sing Cuts Movie Shows, Since Cells are More Livable,” unidentified entry in Lawes scrapbook in Folder #48 1926–30, Box 9, Series VI: General Scrap Books, LLC-JJC (page 519 of scrapbook).

35 For more on accusations of sodomy directed at Osborne, his legal travails, and eventual resignation from Sing Sing, see Rebecca M. McLennan, *The Crisis of Imprisonment: Protest, Politics, and the Making of the American Penal State, 1776–1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 414–16.

36 Roger Panetta, “Up the River: A History of Sing Sing Prison in the Nineteenth Century” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1999), 240.

37 Lucia Zedner, “Wayward Sisters: The Prison for Women,” in *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society*, eds. Norval Morris and David J. Rothman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 331.

38 Nicole Hahn Rafter, “Chastising the Unchaste: Social Control Functions of a Women’s Reformatory, 1894–1931,” in *Social Control and the State*, eds. Stanly Cohen and Andrew Scull (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983), 239.

39 Zedner, “Wayward Sisters,” 340.

40 Ibid., 353.

41 State Prison for Women prisoner number 876, “Evening Entertainment,” *Star of Hope* 16, no. 16 (January 1915): 255. The lantern projector was donated by friends of a Miss McCrea and weekly shows organized for the women at the State Prison.

42 Zedner, “Wayward Sisters,” 342.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., 344.

45 Personal communication, January 12, 2011. Also see Haidee Wasson, “Moving Picture Anatomy: The Case of the Portable Projector” (paper presented at ARTHEMIS conference “Moving Image Studies: Histories, Methods, Disciplines,” Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, June 3–7, 2010).

46 “Girl Prisoners Mutiny,” *New York Times*, January 3, 1920, 2.

47 Zedner, “Wayward Sisters,” 349.

48 Arthur Griffiths, uncredited quotation in Zedner, “Wayward Sisters,” 350.

49 “638 See ‘Movies’ at State Prison: Chapel Decorated with Flags – Institution’s Own Band Plays,” *Hartford Courant*, July 6, 1915, 13. Similarly, at the small East Cambridgeshire jail in Boston on Christmas Day 1922, 223 men and twelve women spent the morning being entertained by motion pictures and local vaudeville performers before an afternoon of recreation outdoors and sitting down to a pork dinner. “Prisoners Entertained in East Cambridge Jail,” *Boston Daily Globe*, December 26, 1922, 7.

50 State Prison for Women prisoner number 914, “A Fine Entertainment,” *Star of Hope* 16, no. 23 (April 1915): 370. My emphasis.

51 Great Meadows prisoner number 1964, “An Essay on Motion Pictures,” *Star of Hope* 18, no. 7 (November 1916): 30.

52 1964, “An Essay,” 30.

53 Ibid.

54 See Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1973), 3–137; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 78–86; and Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 115–40.

55 Norval Morris, “The Contemporary Prison,” in Morris and Rothman, *History of the Prison*, 230.

56 See the “Prison Information Handbooks” (different for male and female inmates) and image of the television next to a barred window at http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/adviceandsupport/prison_life. Accessed January 18, 2011.

Part V

Early Cinema Identities

23

Anonymity

Uncredited and Unknown in Early Cinema

Jane M. Gaines

In Anglo-American literary history, anonymity refers to a condition of identity camouflage. A writer keeps his or her legal name concealed from the public either by using a pseudonym or by publishing a work anonymously. In the literary tradition such concealment occasions an expectation of unveiling, a kind of "outing" involving a move from anonymity or pseudonymity to proper name attribution.[1] But a new industry, eager to associate itself with the respectability of the theatrical and literary worlds, picked up existing terms as well as ways of thinking about artistry. *Moving Picture World*, in November 1910 for instance, would write that "the veil of anonymity has been gradually turned aside and the public is getting to know these moving picture players."[2] The historical concept of literary anonymity, however, does little to help us to understand the complex question of attribution or credit and the attendant issues of job description and labor pools in early cinema.

On first consideration, this seems a straightforward problem. A study of kinds of anonymity would consider the silent screen's "uncredited" players as well as writers. But think of this. In the case of the United States this task would be enormous, since it is well established that until 1911 credits by and large did not appear either in advertising or on reels. Thus my central premise: in the first decade, for all intents and purposes, creative personnel meant anonymous personnel. It goes without saying, however, that motion picture history has focused on the credited over the uncredited. Of course this focus has privileged the first to emerge from anonymity into notoriety,

such as IMP's Florence Lawrence and Vitagraph's Florence Turner, to name only two of the most prominent.[3] In other words, we have studied the exceptions. If we were to study the *rule* of anonymity rather than its exceptions our version of industry growth would look quite different. We would be studying less the evolution of the star system than the expansion of unacknowledged, perhaps unpaid screen work as the industry grew. But again, how manageable is this? To properly study anonymous production before 1911 would be to study all of the work, including scenario writing as well as editing, camera operation, and acting – even to study, in addition to work on the nascent story film, work on the *actualité*.

A further problem is that early accounts of motion picture company labor refer to job "doubling," in which everyone on the set did every manner of work.[4] Thus, because we may not know "which" job – that is, what constituted a job – we can't so easily ask "who did what." Every member of the company was recruited to write.[5] In addition, we may never know how many stenographers, players, and friends were asked to stand in a scene or to paint props and sew costumes. Thus my overriding concern will have to do with anonymous production as a problematic issue for early cinema studies.[6] Indeed, this is a case where obviousness masks the centrality of a particular narrative of progress, a centrality foregrounded by Terry Ramsaye's definition of early industry progress as the maturation from "anonymous production to screen credit."[7]

To begin to sort these issues out, in the case of the US industry at least, we can distinguish between before 1911 and after. Because before 1911, before credits began to appear in promotional advertising as well as on film reels themselves, the "uncredited" nature of creative work renders all personnel effectively anonymous. In addition, as I have said, there is the phenomenon of the doubling up of jobs. This doubling, which effects a functional indeterminacy in our object of study, challenges the tendency to think in terms of credit as, for instance, a noun like the directing or the writing "credit"; in my conclusion I will return to this question and consider whether or not to award retrospective credit to early cinema era personnel.

My contention is that there are several of what we could call "conditions of anonymity" in the first decade of the medium, each significantly different

enough from the others to separate them. To open up this territory I propose in the following to consider four broad categories, sometimes corresponding with groups, each of which would have worked according to the conditions of being "unknown." The first condition, the original anonymity of all creative personnel, I contrast with the second, the extreme anonymity of the pool of amateur scenario writers, who in some ways were even more anonymous than the pool of motion picture extras about which Denise McKenna has written.[8] Finally I turn to the special early cinema anonymity of actors, to what I call *popular anonymity*, and lastly to the parallel anonymity of professional writers, ending with the contrast between these two groups.

But if the early anonymity of players is seen as a kind of negative shroud, as indicated by my opening quotation from the *Moving Picture World* in 1910, our second condition of anonymity carries with it no such expectation of "unveiling." The anonymity of the amateur writer indicates a virtual employment pool in the hinterland and points to practices of scenario writing perfected in the process of industry centralization of control.[9] Amateur writers' need for instruction supported an entire sub-industry of instruction manuals and correspondence schools.[10] Yet the industry reported that only 1 percent of the stories mailed to them were used.[11] Considering the number of stories sent so hopefully, one could argue that amateur writers were exploited. Yet if exploited, theirs was a peculiar kind of exploitation since they were recruited as moviegoers and scenario writers simultaneously, thus efficiently used by an industry that was in this decade discovering that there were few limits to what they could ask of their passionate fans, as we will see.[12]

The phenomenon of anonymous amateur scenario writing has been explained by what is called in the United States the "photoplay writing craze" of the 1910s. This "craze" or fad has been attributed to the fact that emerging companies no longer adapted existing literary sources because of the US Supreme Court 1911 decision *against* the Kalem company and *for* the publishers and estate of author Lew Wallace, author of *Ben Hur*.[13] It is unclear exactly when wide advertising for plots and scenarios began, but one would assume, as Ramsaye tells us, some time after the court delivered

the papers to the office of Kalem producer Frank Marion following the December 1907 *Ben Hur* premiere.[14] Around this time, early companies began to turn to anyone and everyone as sources on the assumption that individual writers would produce "original" stories.[15] Perhaps anticipating the outcome of the Supreme Court decision, the "search" for new, unpublished stories began within stock companies and expanded to the wider public in order to meet an ever-increasing demand. Eventually, however, we should ask why the solicitation of stories and its self-fulfilling prophecy continued into the 1910s – so long *after* the establishment of studio scenario writing departments. *Variety* reported manuscripts still arriving late in the 1920s.[16]

In the first two decades of the century, anonymous is almost synonymous with "woman" writer although one might find a reference to "street car conductors," presumably male, as an example of ordinary people who might submit a story to a company.[17] This phenomenon is perhaps the most interesting in the way the colorless anonym developed into the resourceful freelance writer or, as Wendy Holliday calls her, the "professional amateur."[18] Most important for our purposes, however, is the way that both Holliday and Anne Morey have opened up the question of the way in which the nameless writer was assumed to be a perfect spectator. Aspiring writers were, they tell us, encouraged to "go to the movies" again and again.[19] In addition, the fantasy of paid work was held out as a possibility, almost paralleling the glamorous possibility of stardom.

The reality, however, was that freelance scenario writing was only compensated if a story was bought. And if industry estimates are correct, 99 percent were discarded or returned and those that were bought were significantly rewritten.[20] It also appears that the early companies used submission numbers almost like box office statistics as proof of public enthusiasm for moving pictures. Statistics on scenario submissions appeared at intervals in the trade journals, certainly as early as December 1910, when IMP scenario editor Giles Warren wrote to *Moving Picture World* to report that he had received more than 5,000 scenarios in the last five months.[21] Arthur Thomas, reporting in *Photoplay*, says that 6,000

scenario writers were submitting 180,000 scripts per year.[22] By 1915, a Selig vice-president is quoted in *Motion Picture News* as saying that manuscripts "arrive in bales" at the studio daily. The same executive is the source of the highest of these self-serving estimates in his assertion that "one out of every three men and women in the United States has tried their hand at writing screen plots."[23]

In accounts of the development of the industry before the multiple reel film, the rationale behind the formation of scenario departments was the need for systematic processing of the great bulk of amateur scenarios. More scenario editors were needed to deal with the deluge produced as a consequence of advertising for plots.[24] From the point of view of Louella Parsons, the scenario editor of the Essanay Film Company in Chicago in 1915, the labor of evaluating these submissions was tedious. The company, she reports, was overwhelmed with about six hundred scenarios per week, the majority of which she found "absolutely worthless."[25] Of all of the estimates, that of Giles Warren is the most damning – a "miserable 1 percent" or fifty out of five thousand scenarios he thought useable.[26] While we may be suspicious of these industry numbers as one more hyperbolic promotional practice among many, as part of a larger picture we take them more seriously. Add submission estimates to the number of company advertisements for stories in all genres and to scenario contests, trade press commentary, and the number of screenwriting manuals, followed by correspondence course schools, and they testify to a trend that begins before 1912 and continues into the 1920s.

While there may have been a shortage of stories in the mid-1910s, anonymous contributors, however, soon became redundant even as they were encouraged to work.[27] Unlike the slumming professional who hid behind a pseudonym until 1914, the amateur wrote to get the name recognition that had so little chance of coming. Considering the 1 percent acceptance rate figure, the widely circulated idea that viewers could see their stories on the screen verged on a hoax.[28] Thus to study anonymous amateur writers is finally to study a condition that resembles neither literary anonymity nor the early stage of anonymous collaboration within a

company. One may begin to study the amateur writer only to discover that one is studying instead the production of fandom. Here is where the amateur contest winner raises the question of the difference between being "unknown" and being anonymous, a difference so slight and yet so significant. Amateurs who won a contest effectively won a lottery in which the prize was the publication of their name, not necessarily the production of their story. What do we do with the name "Ida Damon," that of the St. Louis teenager who *Motion Picture News* reports having won a Thanhouser scenario writing contest in 1915 but about whom nothing else is known today?[29] Yes, "Ida Damon" proves that a writer could emerge from the great bottomless reservoir of anonymous labor, but such an amateur would most likely always be an "unknown." Thus one could have one's name made public but remain unknown, or one became a known "unknown," a complex situation to which I will return. The ultimate hope was held out by the example of Elaine Sterne, who writes in *Photoplay* about how her early discovery led to professional opportunity. All it took would be a few exceptions, personal stories full of promise, to divert the public from seeing amateur writing as thankless anonymous work.[30]

Yet no matter how many exceptions we foreground, such as the established named scenario writers Anita Loos and Agnes Christine Johnson, these anonymous authors remain even more obscure than motion picture extras.[31] As I am arguing, this bottomless pool of hopeful but nameless writers defines one of, if not *the* largest group of early cinema's anonymous ranks. Spread throughout cities and small towns in the United States, these contributors were known neither to each other nor to industry decision-makers, whether producers, scenario editors, or directors. They were known only to themselves and to their families, and maybe not even to them. Was there ever such a large unseen reserve of creative labor, a reserve made possible in the first decade when anonymity veiled not only persons with names but obscured the difference between workers and consumers?

Let us return to our project of sorting out kinds of anonymity within anonymous production – to our third and fourth categories. I would argue that early cinema research has already begun this work in its different approaches to studying players as opposed to writers.[32] In retrospect, the

two main anonymous groups, actors and professional writers, raise quite separate issues, so we need first to emphasize their categorical difference before showing how at the advent of cinema they were once analogized and even compared as "personalities."

The question of player anonymity, I am arguing, is precisely where literary anonymity is shown to be most inapplicable to motion picture creative work. Whereas literary anonymity is faceless, screen anonymity, properly on-screen anonymity, is of course both "bodied" and "faced." The literary anonym is neither seen by face nor known by name. A player, in contrast, can be seen on the screen, presenting the public with an identifiable face and body, but still remain unknown (by name) if uncredited. A player unknown in 1910 may have had a recognizable face, but as yet no name was circulated to go with his or her face. This was either because players' names were withheld by the producing company (while the public clamored for them) or because, as we know, all performances were at the time uncredited.[33] This phenomenon in which a player could be recognized by viewers in more than one screen appearance but remain publicly unnamed produced the paradoxical condition of what I am calling *popular anonymity*. Perhaps this condition is best exemplified by the "IMP Girl," the "Biograph Girl," the "Kalem Girl," and the "Vitagraph Girl." Because audiences associated these artificially anonymized players with faces, those thus singled out enjoyed at least one benefit of proper name recognition – they were lead players.

Thinking about popular anonymity helps us to open up not only the pre-promotional other side of celebrity (before players were names), but also the underside of celebrity. By underside I mean less the fall from notoriety than its feared inverse – the condition of never known or forever "unknown." Intriguing in this regard is "No Face," Ernst Bloch's title for a short piece on the wages of theatrical success in Germany. Of an aspiring actress he writes that "her face never took shape … nothing came out well, or even came out."[34] Never breaking out of faceless anonymity, the default position of celebrity culture, the young woman suffers too much hurt and languishes in an institution. She was never more than an "unknown."

There are "unknowns" and then there are "unknowns," as I am arguing. As we realize, in the entertainment industry, the "unknown" has historically

been understood as the talent (actor somewhat more than writer) who has not yet emerged or who may never emerge into the publicity limelight. Thus the term “unknown” carries a double set of connotations, only one of which pertains to an early, hopeful career stage. At the same time, “unknown” also has overtones of the failure of the commercialization of personhood, the consequences of unsuccessful marketing or frustrated self-promotion. Given the staunch optimism of the industry, however, “unknowns” in their time might still have been able to carry on as the “as-yet-undiscovered.”

If the anonymous on-screen player was paradoxically unknown but recognizable, the anonymous scenario writer was neither visually recognizable as a personality (by virtue of still or motion photography) nor recognizable as a named personality (by virtue of print advertising). “Who … is held in such complete obscurity as the writer of the scenario?” asked “Emar” in *Moving Picture World* in 1910.[35] While today we may be intrigued by the obscured, the first motion picture historians followed only proper names. This leaves us a legacy of no names. While acknowledging the extreme difficulty of researching the first decade of writing in the United States as well as in France, scholars such as Edward Azlant and Isabelle Raynauld have nevertheless begun to describe scenario practices.[36] One aspect of this scholarship involves raising the question of attribution relative to work that was originally unattributed or uncredited. Here, the approach that attempts to imagine authorship for work which was originally unauthored is familiar. And it is of course the legacy of literary as well as art historical criticism – the search for the early uncredited or unacknowledged work of the figure who emerges from obscurity into later notoriety. An example might be how Stanner E. V. Taylor is now seen as a screenwriter who worked steadily in the first two decades. He was first hired, however, to work on staff at Biograph in the years characterized by anonymous production. Thus, his work there is “unrecorded output,” as one study puts it.[37] When he is later credited as the writer on the first film that D. W. Griffith directed, *Adventures of Dollie* (1908), Taylor suddenly becomes seen as an “author,” and yet this is a moment in which motion picture scenarios were unauthored. Paradoxically, anonymity only comes into relief when the proper name of a likely author emerges. Otherwise,

anonymity as an early labor practice and condition of existence is itself obscured.

In 1910, however, some commentators thought that professional writers would emerge from obscurity and, in so doing, help to elevate the esteem in which moving pictures were held. This was the moment when players and writers emerged together as contenders for credit and name publicity. With an interest in this phenomenon, I return to a brief time in 1910 when the question of scenario writers as personalities on a par with actors was up for debate. On the front page of *Moving Picture World* on March 12, 1910, the unsigned editorial "Giving Credit Where Credit is Due" raises the question. The editorial writer, speaking as "we," asserts two "facts," as they are called. One is that the public is "unmistakably interested in the personalities of the chief performer." The other is that public interest in the moving picture is on the rise.[38] Responding to what is perceived as a growing public fascination, the editorial writer(s) here use themselves as guinea pigs to test the assumption that public perception is changing. In the editorial, they describe how they were beginning to see personalities where they had seen none before. The epiphany? The editorial describes being struck, while walking on a New York street, by a display advertisement for the Kalem company players. Picture this "we" standing before a display ad mounted outside a motion picture theatre (Figure 23.1). The reference is most likely to the composite image figured here in the published description: "We ourselves only this last week stopped quite unconsciously outside of a well-known moving picture theatre in New York City and after we admired the pictures we discovered that we were looking at portraits of the Kalem Stock Company. Yet before that we seemed to be simply conscious that we were looking as all of us do at pictures of ordinary actors and actresses outside an ordinary theatre."[39]

Figure 23.1 The Kalem Stock Company, 1909. Courtesy: Museum of Modern Art.

Crucially, the editorial writer is not exactly “seeing stars” as yet since the US star system did not really emerge until late 1913 or early 1914, thus in 1910 these would be more properly “picture personalities.”[40] Still, in its

format, the display ad takes a step. We should observe that these are separated and individuated portraits. What "arrests" the editor is not, after all, a group portrait with personnel bunched together or a panoramic shot with members lined up in a row. What stops pedestrians are portraits of personalities.

The image reproduced here represents the Kalem company in 1909, most likely photographed from the one-of-a-kind street display on which individual portraits were mounted. On the back of an 8 × 10 original photographic reduction of the large display ad, Gene Gauntier later wrote: "First published photo of a stock company."[41] In 1909, as we see, no player hierarchy within the Kalem company is being promoted as yet. Gene Gauntier is not quite the "Kalem Girl" she would soon become. Since the writer does not single her out at all we can assume that in March 1910 she has achieved neither what I am calling *popular anonymity* nor picture personality status.

However, the *Moving Picture World* editor seems to be projecting individuation onto the portraits of the Kalem players – no longer "ordinary," as he says, but suddenly because made public in this way losing their ordinariness and on the verge of becoming extraordinary. One receives the impression that the players in the photograph are poised and ready to almost "burst" out of their odd anonymous cocoons. Because at this moment when companies supposedly suppressed player identity the company has all but named these players. Yet there is tension here because at the same time that the company may have circulated individual portraits, the players' identities are subsumed into the identity of the company itself, as Bowser has explained.[42] Yes, the style of portraiture invites differentiation, but without individual names below each, no personalities emerge. As for the odd "personality" of the trademarked company, Kalem, at this early date the analogy between the person and the company appears to be somewhat tentative.

What is more, the face portraits are indistinguishable by role, with directors, co-directors, writers, and actors all awarded the same visual treatment. Portraits of all company members are represented here with the exception of producers Samuel Long and Frank Marion. Effectively, however, given the doubling of roles at that moment, writers, directors, and

actors were, in fact, *all players*.[43] The style of portraiture, if nothing else, tells us in addition that all motion picture workers are at this point potentially glamorous. Sydney Olcott, who in 1910 was undertaking more directing than acting work, is given the low-light mystery treatment befitting an actor. Further, the *Moving Picture World* editors tip us off to something that helps us to define anonymous production. In referring to all of the Kalem personnel as "actors and actresses" the editorial makes what appears to be an incorrect assumption. But perhaps they are not mistaken since this is exactly the impression that the Kalem display is giving – directors are actors, writers are directors, actors are directors, directors are actresses, actresses are writers, and writers are actresses. And if the prototypical ideal player in 1910 is Gene Gauntier, there *was* such a thing as a player who was actor-writer-director-unit producer.

The *Moving Picture World* editorial is aware of the controversy about the publication of the proper names of players and reports that the Edison company, Selig, and others were publishing the names of "noted" authors. Thus, the editorial just wants to know if the same evaluative criteria applied to players could apply to writers. In March 1910 the editors do not know what the public wants, but they attempt to compare actors and writers in terms of "distinctive features." They write: "The personalitie [*sic*] of the author has hardly yet manifested itself in the moving picture. What is there about a moving picture play by such men to distinguish it from a play by an unknown author? Does the public really care, then for the authors of moving picture stories when there seems to be no means of identifying them or labeling them with a distinctive quality?"[44]

At this historical moment when a writer might have been paid more than a director or even an actor, the tendency to analogize the famous writer with the potentially famous player is strong. And as Charlie Keil tells us, critics were already inclined to assign authorship of the moving picture to the writer in these years.[45] Yet in the "Giving Credit" editorial there is a slight challenge to thinking in purely literary terms. Because writers are compared with the actors emerging so identifiably on the screen, the question of the visibility of artistic style, assumed to be a personal expression, slips into the discussion.

The question of the established novelist or dramatic writer as opposed to the unknown writer parallels that of the larger problem of the sign of the literary author in the text. Let us see what happens when we answer each of the questions posed by the editorial honestly. To rephrase the first question: "What is there to distinguish the work of the well known from the unknown author?" The easy answer is "nothing" since in 1910 there were no screen credits, although those hoping to elevate the moving picture by establishing its authorial pedigree might expect that a positive answer was forthcoming. Yet the answer to the question is also "nothing" because until the success of the auteur theory in the 1950s, the case will not be made successfully that the style of the photographic "work" could evidence the "hand" of one author as opposed to another. What would it finally matter whether the case was made for one writer over another when the same case could be made for the director over the writer? In this moment, when the question of authorship *of* and *in* the photographic image was still open, one sees a range of authorial criteria posed. The end of the "Giving Credit" editorial suggests that stories might be seen as distinguishable because some were more "fresh and dramatic" than others.[46] One commentator in *Nickelodeon* even made the case for seeing the "thoughts of the author of the picture as embodied in changing scenes."[47]

The answer to the second question, "Does the public care … if there is no means of either 'identifying' or 'labeling' them?" would again be "no," that is, not until the success of the idea that the moving picture could, on screen, evidence the "distinctive quality" of an artist. The editorial continues, "The personal equation of the author has hardly yet manifested itself in the moving picture."[48] The truth is that there was no direct evidence of the "thoughts" of the literary writer manifest on the screen whereas evidence of "distinctive" artistry was everywhere evident in the expressive body of the actor. This expectation of "distinctive quality" would appear to be a high standard, but no higher than the standard an artist has historically been expected to meet if he or she is to emerge from the crowd. It is an especially difficult standard to meet in a technologically produced and mass-made form that is constitutionally at odds with romantic notions of artistic expression. Yet the idea that artistic style, whether the expression of actor, writer, or director, is a manifestation of his or her "personalitie" [*sic*] is

stubbornly there in this early moment and, followed over the rest of the century, would clearly die hard.[49]

Finally, the March 1910 "Giving Credit" article affords us a chance to resist the force of the historical narrative that encourages us to understand events in terms of their known outcomes. This particular article has been interpreted more than once as *Moving Picture World*'s conclusion that scenarists will probably *not* receive screen credits.[50] When one reads the editorial closely, however, one finds that the "credit" of the title does not refer at all to screen credit. Rather, as the title spells out, the interest is in the gesture of fair acknowledgment expressed in the platitudinous "giving credit where credit is due." Further, the editorial does not conclude that the public is *not* interested in the personalities of scenario writers. Rather, it says that this is an open question, one referred to readers: "This is a point on which we would like to have the opinion of our readers."[51]

In retrospect we know that audiences never exactly clamored for the names of scenario authors the way they did for the names of players. Since what was emerging was only the idea of "names on reels," soon the very *Moving Picture World* editors who had asked if the public wanted to know the names of writers advocated publicizing the names of players. In an editorial eight months after the "Giving Credit" commentary, in the November 12, 1910 issue, *Moving Picture World* came out in favor of names on reels for players listed by character but still did not use the term "screen credit."[52] Professional writers, who to some degree had used to their own advantage the anonymity everyone enjoyed, were by 1914 asking for screen credit. But we still can't say exactly when they ceased to hide behind pseudonyms (for fear of lending their names to the unproved form) and began to use their proper names.[53] Who in the entertainment business used his or her given name or even the same pseudonym all of the time, anyway? If Epes W. Sargent was "Chicot" as well as Lulu Johnson, D. W. Griffith was also Irene Sinclair and Granville Warwick, and these are only a few of the many examples of the proliferation of pseudonyms in the first decade.[54] So the search for the name of the player or writer may yield a proper name covering another name covering yet another name. Stated as a riddle this would be: How do we know who was who when *who* wasn't who

we thought he or she was? But there is one more identification riddle to which I want to turn in conclusion. How do we know who did what when no one gave a thought to "who did what," that is, when screen credit didn't exist? To answer the question "who did what" may or may not be to assign retrospective credit.

Conclusion: Retrospective Credit

Why not? Because a retrospective "credit" is not a "screen credit" in the strict historical sense. Is awarding retrospective "credit" then a distorting intervention? The case of Gene Gauntier stands out as a relatively well-documented example and I have discussed the vagaries of her work history elsewhere.[55] Her Kalem career, from 1907 to 1912, has received perhaps the most attention.[56] Less scholarship, however, has been devoted to the short-lived Gene Gauntier Feature Players formed with Sydney Olcott and her husband Jack Clarke, although at least one of the first motion picture historians was impressed with how invaluable she was to the company's functioning.[57] Important for us is the letter she writes on Gene Gauntier Feature Players letterhead dated June 28, 1915 and addressed to "Colonel" William Selig. In the letter – which is effectively a job application – she says that she wrote all of Kalem's foreign-produced films as well as *From the Manger to the Cross* about which she says, "This masterpiece was also conceived, written, and co-directed by me, as was *The Colleen Bawn*, *Arrah-na-Pogue*, *The Shaughraun*, *The Kerry Gow*, *The Wives of Jamestown*, and five hundreds [*sic*] others."[58] We have no reason to doubt Gene Gauntier, but ironically it is the historical convention of uncredited work that reinforces the credibility of the letter. Since we know that in these years the Kalem company neither advertised personnel names nor listed names on reels, this letter could be taken as evidence of credit on motion picture titles that perhaps *should have gone to* Gene Gauntier. But of what, exactly, does this letter provide evidence? While it is certainly evidence that she had written to Selig saying that she had authored and co-directed not only key Kalem titles but hundreds of others, it is not exactly evidence of screen credit, because, as we know, in the 1910s when the majority of these

films were produced the practice of giving screen credit did not exist. What we can do is to interpret the letter to mean that around 1910 Gene Gauntier had performed the kind of work (co-directing, writing) that by 1915 was receiving credit in advertising if not in beginning or end titles appearing on film reels.

It should come as no surprise that our first inclination on reading Gene Gauntier's 1915 letter is to change the historical record and to rewrite the credits for these films, adding Gene Gauntier. Yet we hesitate. We hesitate because the letter documents something else. To return to my original point, for us, the letter importantly evidences the anonymous production that characterizes the first decade, but what is more, for historiography it poses an interesting dilemma. The scholarship that involves supplying missing proper names is well established. But because anonymity represents the antithesis – the unnamed – the "conditions of anonymity" to which I refer here may never receive serious consideration. Further, preserving any condition of anonymity seems the opposite of the traditional work of scholarship because understanding anonymity in early cinema might require respecting the category of nameless personnel as *finally and definitively unnamed*. Then again, is respect for the effective anonymity of these anonymous people themselves really at odds with the project of researching the identities of early cinema personnel? Because it may be that one uncovers the names of a few of the anonymous in order to prove that at least some of them did indeed exist as real historical persons with proper names, however anonymous their work.

Notes

1 An example is John Mullen who argues that anonymity makes us want to know the identity of the author (John Mullen, *Anonymity: A Secret History of English Literature* [London: Faber, 2007]). This legacy is still present in the historiographic approach to anonymity and pseudonymity in screen history. James A. Secord writes of the Victorian moment that the anonym as well as the pseudonym might be part of authorial play with the public, even a part of the persona (James A. Secord, *Victorian Sensation: The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of*

Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 367). The present chapter is part of my longstanding critique of authorship in the motion picture – a medium that offers technological resistance to the literary concept. See Jane M. Gaines, *Contested Culture: The Image, the Voice, and the Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 1–41; "Of Cabbages and Authors," in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, eds. Jennifer Bean and Diana Negra (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 88–118; and "Early Cinema's Heyday of Copying: The Too Many Copies of *L'Arroseur arrosé*," *Cultural Studies* 20, nos. 2–3 (2006): 227–44.

2 Quoted in Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907–1915* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 117.

3 Between 1910 and 1912 most titles were released without players' names in advertisements or on films. Beginning in 1911 the Edison company listed directors, writers, and the cast in advertisements, which may be why this year has emerged as the origin of screen credits in the United States. Notable exceptions mentioned by Eileen Bowser include 1910, the year the Thanhouser company began giving all players' names, the Vitagraph company began to promote Florence Turner, and IMP began to advertise Florence Lawrence. While Lawrence has been understood as the "first" motion picture star, Bowser says that it was more likely a tie between the two (*Transformation of Cinema*, 112–13 and 117–18).

4 Terry Ramsaye notes that Florence Turner was paid $18 per week as wardrobe mistress and $5 if she acted, and "It was accepted practice then to impress actors into service as carpenters, scene painters and the like." According to Lewis Jacobs, "By 1908 directing, acting, photographing, writing, and laboratory work were separate crafts, all of equal status.… No one received any screen credit for the work he did." He refers to the two standard explanations for not giving screen credit, both of which need reconsideration: (1) employers feared public notoriety would pressure them to increase wages; and (2) actors as well as directors and camera operators did not want to publicize their work for what was regarded as a "shabby occupation." Karen Ward Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 42; Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights* (New York: Simon and Schuster,

1986), 442–3; Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1975), 39 and 59.

5 Benjamin Hampton describes how story ideas were circulated by "directors, cameramen, players, members of office staff," while Epes Sargent writes that "If we started to list the Edison players who are writers, we would have to give the complete roster." Benjamin B. Hampton, *A History of the American Film Industry from Its Beginnings to 1931* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 130; Epes W. Sargent, "The Literary Side of the Motion Picture World," *Moving Picture World* 21, no. 2 (July 11, 1914): 199.

6 See Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 1. What interests me, finally, is less crediting the uncredited or providing the proper attribution. Rather, it is the challenge to the research practice of labeling and naming. Ultimately, mine is an offensive against traditional historiography, which is dedicated to narrating those events that can be attributed to proper names. On the connection between names and "bottom-up" history see Rancière, who reminds us that what has been revolutionary in the science of history in the last decades has been the foregrounding of anonymous lives over the lives of subjects with proper names.

7 The antithesis of the proprietary credit would be anonymously produced folk art. See Gustav Melcher, "Der Name in der Filmkunst," *Der Kinematograph* 257 (1911) quoted in Heide Schlüpmann, *The Uncanny Gaze: The Drama of Early German Cinema* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 67: "Advertising with a name goes against 'folk art' in the actual sense of the term."

8 Denise M. McKenna, "The City That Made the Picture Move: Gender, Labor, and the Film Industry in Los Angeles, 1908–1917" (PhD diss., New York University, 2008), ProQuest (AAT3330159).

9 Janet Staiger, "The Hollywood Mode of Production to 1930," in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, eds. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 113–41. Staiger also comments on the eventual effect that management control and internal company

consolidation had on screenwriting practices. See “Blueprints for Feature Films: Hollywood’s Continuity Scripts,” in *The American Film Industry*, ed. Tino Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 173–92; “Dividing Labour for Production Control: Thomas Ince and the Rise of the Studio System,” *Cinema Journal* 17, no. 2 (1979): 16–25.

10 Anne Morey, “‘Have You the Power?’: The Palmer Photoplay Corporation and the Film Viewer/Author in the 1920s,” *Film History* 9, no. 3 (1997): 300–19; and *Hollywood Outsiders: The Adaptation of the Film Industry, 1913–1934* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

11 R.V.S., “Scenario Construction,” *Moving Picture World* 8, no. 6 (February 11, 1911): 294; and G. Warren, “Scenarios,” Letters to the Editors, *Moving Picture World* 7, no. 25 (December 17, 1910): 1424–5.

12 The classic study of fandom from 1908 to 1915 explores the ways in which the new industry cultivated young women as an audience. See Shelley Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture After the Nickelodeon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

13 Wendy Holliday, “Hollywood’s Modern Women: Screenwriting, Work Culture, and Feminism, 1910–1940” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1995), USC Digital Library (lacbd-m17700), 85–8; Epes W. Sargent, “The *Ben Hur* Case,” *Moving Picture World* 10, no. 10 (December 9, 1911): 793; Gene Gauntier, “Blazing the Trail,” *Woman’s Home Companion* (October 1928): 184 and 186. A typescript of the complete memoir “Blazing the Trail” from which the *Women’s Home Companion* series was edited is held in the Celeste Bartos Film Study Center, Museum of Modern Art, New York. The rest of the installments appeared in November 1928, December 1928, January 1929, February 1929, and March 1929.

14 Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights*, 462–3.

15 Isabelle Raynauld, “Screenwriting,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (New York: Routledge, 2010), 837; Edward Azlant, “Screenwriting for the Early Silent Film: Forgotten Pioneers, 1897–1911,” *Film History* 9, no. 3 (1997): 246; and “The Theory, History, and Practice of Screenwriting, 1897–1920” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980), 104.

16 “Unsolicited Manuscripts Not Read,” *Variety*, August 22, 1928, 6.

17 Holliday, “Hollywood’s Modern Women,” 113.

18 Ibid., 104.

19 Ibid., 92; Morey, *Hollywood Outsiders*, 316.

20 R.V.S., “Scenario Construction,” 294; Warren, “Scenarios,” 1425.

21 Warren, “Scenarios,” 1424.

22 Arthur W. Thomas, “The Photoplaywrights’ Department,” *Photoplay* 6, no. 4 (September 1914): 162.

23 Quoted in Holliday, “Hollywood’s Modern Women,” 87.

24 R.V.S., “Scenario Construction,” 294.

25 L. O. Parsons, “A Message to Scenario Writers,” in *The Art of Photoplay Writing*, ed. Catherine Carr (New York: Hannis Jordan, 1914), 117.

26 Warren, “Scenarios,” 1425.

27 Morey, “‘Have You the Power?’,” 303. Correspondence schools sent contradictory messages to the amateur writer, summarized by one author as: “On the one hand, film is a democratic art and anyone can enter it. On the other, it requires both training and talent.” Ibid., 311.

28 Horace A. Fuld, “The Fakes and Frauds in Motion Pictures: Getting into the Film Business,” *Motion Picture Magazine* 10 (October 1915): 107. Fuld observed that for the novice who longed to be connected to the industry, “there opens up a big and alluring prospect and an almost infinite number of ways of having his money taken away from him.”

29 “St. Louis Girl Wins Thanhouser $10,000 Prize,” *Motion Picture News* 11, no. 10 (March 13, 1915): 46.

30 Elaine Sterne, “Writing for the Movies as a Profession,” *Photoplay* 6, no. 5 (October 1914): 156.

31 Holliday, “Hollywood’s Modern Women,” 120–4.

32 Azlant, “Screenwriting for the Early Silent Film,” 228; Bowser, *Transformation of Cinema*, chap. 7; Richard deCordova, “The Emergence of the Star System in America,” *Wide Angle* 6, no. 4 (1985): 4–13; and *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America, 1907–1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Janet Staiger, “Seeing Stars,” *Velvet Light Trap* 20 (1983): 10–15. Work on the history

of screenwriting is thin compared with the established literature on the evolution of players into star actors and actresses in the United States. More work needs to be done, however, on comparative national star systems that doesn't forcibly impose the US paradigm onto other examples.

33 Bowser, *Transformation of Cinema*, 108; Mahar, *Women Filmmakers*, 62–3. Another possibility, in addition to the well-known charge that the Biograph company notoriously withheld the names of players after other companies began advertising them, is that actor turnover made name promotion a bad investment. Then again, players such as Marion Leonard, the second "Biograph Girl," left the company because she wanted to capitalize on her screen visibility and subsequently formed the first star-producing company, a venture that circulated her name and image widely.

34 Ernst Bloch, *Traces* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 25.

35 Emar, "Concerning Scenarios," *Moving Picture World* 7, no. 1 (July 9, 1910): 76.

36 Azlant, "Screenwriting for the Early Silent Film"; Isabelle Raynauld, "Written Scenarios of Early French Cinema: Screenwriting Practices in the First Twenty Years," *Film History* 9, no. 3 (1997): 257–68.

37 Azlant, "Screenwriting for the Early Silent Film," 238.

38 "Giving Credit Where Credit is Due," *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 10 (March 12, 1910): 369.

39 Ibid.

40 deCordova, "The Emergence," 98–107.

41 As quoted in Bowser, *Transformation of Cinema*, 111. Bowser identifies from the original in the Museum of Modern Art stills archive the Kalem Stock Company players in 1909: Amelia Barleon, Kenean Buel, Louise Melford, Sidney Olcott, Gene Gauntier, James Vincent, Jane Wolfe, Robert Vignola, George Melford, Tom Santley. One wonders if the March 1910 editorial writer is unaware that *Moving Picture World* had already published the Kalem composite image in January 1910. There, the editors explained that the Kalem "lobby display" was produced in response to managers who asked for advertising that did not encourage fan adulation. See "Photographs of Moving Picture Actors," *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 2 (January 15, 1910): 50.

42 Bowser, *Transformation of Cinema*, chap. 7.

43 Gauntier, “Blazing the Trail,” 182; Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film*, 61; and R.V.S., “Scenario Construction,” 294. Around 1907 writers were paid $20 per reel – twice as much as the director who received $10, thus the $5–15 per idea that writers could receive was good pay. Before 1911, before the output was raised to two films per week, directors both wrote scenarios and staged them.

44 “Giving Credit,” 369.

45 Charlie Keil, *Early American Cinema in Transition: Story, Style, and Filmmaking, 1907–1913* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 38.

46 “Giving Credit,” 370.

47 David Sherrill Hulfish, “Art in Moving Pictures,” *Nickelodeon* 1, no. 5 (1908): 139.

48 “Giving Credit,” 369.

49 Gaines, “Of Cabbages and Authors,” 97–101. I have elsewhere critiqued the analogy made between the author and the work. In 1910 the case for giving credit to writers is made by means of an equally dubious analogy. By implication, the “distinctive features” of one’s writing style are like the “distinctive features” of one’s face. One can see today the personal property implications of this argument which support the basis of Anglo-American copyright (see Gaines, *Contested Culture*).

50 Bowser, *Transformation of Cinema*, 112; Holliday, *Hollywood’s Modern Women*, 119.

51 “Giving Credit,” 369.

52 As quoted in Bowser, *Transformation of Cinema*, 117. Bowser says that examining extant prints is a difficult way to determine the beginning of credit titles because few surviving prints have the beginning titles intact, and also because titles might have been added later when films were re-released. One of the earliest extant films she has found that includes credit titles is *When the Sun Went Out* (Kalem, 1911) (ibid., 118). The Edison company’s decision to give scenario writers screen credit in 1911 coincided with the publication of the first edition of Epes W. Sargent, *Technique of the Photoplay* (New York: Chambers, 1912). See Raynauld, “Screenwriting,” 837.

53 Raynauld, “Screenwriting,” 836. In 1908 “noted dramatists” might have been recruited to write photoplays, but that didn’t mean that their names appeared either in advertisements or on reels. See Raynauld, “Written Scenarios,” 263; “Noted Dramatists,” *Moving Picture World* 2, no. 13 (March 28, 1908): 263.

54 Azlant, “Screenwriting for the Early Silent Film,” 245, 257–8.

55 Jane Gaines, “World Women: Still Circulating Silent Era Film Prints,” *Framework* 51, no. 2 (2010): 293–4.

56 Denis Condon, *Early Irish Cinema 1895–1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008); Gary W. Harner, “The Kalem Company, Travel, and On-Location Shooting,” *Film History* 10, no. 2 (1998): 118–207.

57 Robert Grau, *The Theatre of Science* (New York: Broadway Publishing, 1914), 363. She oversaw “everything from the dark-room to the business offices” in addition to being “star, author, director, and technician” and with Jack J. Clarke was “equal owner of the enterprise.”

58 Gene Gauntier, “Letter to Colonel William Selig” (June 28, 1915), William Selig Collection, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. There is only one title for which Gauntier received credit as director. This is *Grandmother*, released July 13, 1910 and according to Anthony Slide mentioned in *Moving Picture World* 7, no. 3 (July 16, 1910). See Anthony Slide, *The Silent Feminists: America’s First Women Directors* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 118. The FIAF Treasures Online database lists 19 extant Kalem titles on which she worked and although she is listed as “cast” on all, she is only listed as “writer” on *The Colleen Bawn* (1911), *Captured by Bedouins* (1912), *Winning A Widow* (1912), and *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912).

24

The Invention of Cinematic Celebrity in the United Kingdom

Andrew Shail

This chapter describes the conditions under which the concept of intra-filmic celebrity appeared in the United Kingdom, its "invention" as a category rather than the emergence of specific stars. Admittedly the emergence of this category was directed by the efforts of a number of film production companies to generate new product profiles and new product lines, and so was linked to the popular appearance of figures designated as "personalities of the medium," but decisions to promote regular "picture players" were culturally and industrially determined, and the first publicity campaigns to disclose names merely solidified a category that had been under assembly for several years. In addition, while the process of "inventing" film celebrity in the United Kingdom shared some traits with the equivalent process in the United States (the nation easily regarded as the crucible of film celebrity), there were also a number of important variations. This chapter will therefore detail both how the film celebrity appeared in the United Kingdom and how the story of this appearance differed from events in the United States, as charted by Richard deCordova in his still authoritative 1990 book.[1]

The absence of the "star" is one of early cinema's clearest distinguishing features. The identities of film-only performers were not considered to be relevant to popular discussions of film until around 1910, the time of cinema's "second birth" in the United Kingdom (its transformation from "animated photography" into "the cinema"),[2] half a generation after the appearance of projected motion picture apparatuses there in early 1896.

Nonetheless, cinema in its first fourteen years *did* have its celebrities. Because he was given the exclusive task of introducing the Lumière Cinématographe to the United Kingdom during 1896, first at the Regent Street Polytechnic and then at a number of Stoll variety theaters, the French music hall artiste Félicien Trewey was publicly associated with the new phenomenon through notice in the national press.[3] Thomas Edison had closely linked his name with the idea of moving photographs from the appearance of the Kinetoscope in Britain in October 1894,[4] and surviving evidence shows that, as an organized filmmaking industry began to cohere in the United Kingdom from 1897, Charles Urban, manager of first the Warwick Trading Company, then the Charles Urban Trading Company, then the Natural Colour Kinematograph Company, established not just an industry-wide reputation but even a degree of public notoriety as the industry leader.[5] Cinema was not incompatible with a discourse of celebrity, and although both Trewey and Edison possessed fame in realms beyond film, Urban did not, meaning that he could be regarded as an "intra-filmic" celebrity in that his name was publicly known exclusively in connection with the realm of film production. The question I will address here is how and why the filmed performer came to emerge as the primary celebrity of film.

Even the filmed body was associated with celebrity before the first "picture personalities." Filmmakers, both national and local, quickly realized that audiences could be attracted by the opportunity to see images of known celebrities. Even before the end of the nineteenth century, royalty, military leaders and heroes, politicians, religious leaders, and sports figures were all featured in news event films, either as the focus of such films or as participants in the news event. Audiences were also as likely to encounter celebrities in the filmic equivalents of "portrait" magazine articles, showing the celebrity outside their sphere of fame. The two types also overlapped. In August 1906 R. W. Paul's releases included a roughly two-minute film "showing the Oval cricket match between well-known flat and steeplechase jockeys and amateur champion athletes.… The photographic quality is exceptionally good, each of the players being easily recognised. The teams included, on the side of the amateur athletes: W. Lotingo (Larry Lynx) capt., J. W. Morton, G. E. Larner, C. H. Jupp, and E. H. Miles; and on that of the

jockeys: M. Cannon (capt.), D. Maher, J. H. Martin, and P. Challoner."[6] In addition, filmmakers in this period corraled known performers wherever they could, and even sought to duplicate performances that were amenable to being filmed. R. W. Paul's *Chirgwin The White-Eyed Kaffir* (1896) was one of the first films to make use of the public's ability to recognize a known music hall celebrity. The British branch of the French Gaumont company, in exploiting the Chronophone, a synchronized film sound system, from 1904, made use of several well-known British music hall singers. Chronophone films of one of the most famous of these, Harry Lauder (known for delivering comic songs in distinctive Scots while dressed in Kilt and Tam o'shanter), began to appear at the Hippodrome in July 1907.[7] As distinct from celebrities *filmed* and *loaned to film*, therefore, "picture personalities" were celebrities *of* film, in the sense of being (a) film's habitually appearing bodies, (b) the celebrities visible *in* film, and (c) celebrities whose fame was wholly generated *by* film. At the very least, this version of celebrity required that employees of film production companies be identified and publicized from film to film. Thus while known celebrities appeared in films in the United Kingdom even before the turn of the century, film's own celebrity was, from one point of view, a symptom of the industry's capacity to generate celebrities purely out of its own products.

Another Cinema

The context for the emergence of a system of intra-filmic celebrity based on filmed bodies is best expounded by a survey of the reasons for its *non*-appearance during the first fourteen years of the cinematograph's presence in the United Kingdom. These circumstances did not present "impediments," barriers later removed to "liberate" cinema; rather, they were factors of the various proto-institutions that clustered around the cinematograph during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods:

> (1) Amongst the cinematograph's many initial profiles in popular discourse, one of the more enduring construed it as an "a-human" technology, a replacement for human perceptual processes, enabling events to make their own records. One of its technological virtues was

located in its ability to transcribe visual inputs without duplicating the perceptual horizons and filters built into human sight.[8] In 1902, for example, the author George Sims explained that he regarded his ethnographically inclined short stories as much like films because "[a]s they happened so you will see them reproduce themselves."[9] For Sims, films were not just good records, they were self-creating records. While this profile did not prevent film viewers from regarding filmed bodies as performers, it did assert that film was not ideally suited to filming contrived activities, as the act of contriving the material filmed would render the cinematograph's a-human impartiality redundant.[10] Hence a certain incompatibility between cinema and fiction meant that contrived performances tended to be regarded as either merely preserved by film (which distinguished them from "film performances") or, in the case of performances that clearly *were* staged for films, as a second-tier use for a technology whose purpose was the making of records of the world.

(2) Although, in the hands of its exhibitors, the cinematograph was seldom presented as an inhuman technology, and although audiences brought a range of models of social engagement to early cinematograph shows, the human "aspect" that such shows assumed was derived as much from those people whom audiences encountered at the site of exhibition as it was from "enunciators" whom audiences might identify either within or "behind" films. Joe Kember has detailed how live agents working the public lecturing circuit, in fairgrounds, and in traveling shows provided film audiences with the sense of "personality and performance" that, he judges, the media public widely sought in their engagement with the image.[11] These agents occupied four strata: (a) lecturers ("explainers" or "talkers" who would provide a commentary "activating" the images); (b) "showmen" (showpeople) and barkers working outside and inside the show both to prepare audiences for the show and to "talk" the images much like lecturers; (c) technical personnel, including projectionists and effects people (from "rumblers" producing incidental noises to lip-synching elocutionists), the former often taking on lecturing or showperson responsibilities; and (d) variety performers, from jugglers and comedians to musicians and

singers, who, according to the nature of their skills, would perform either between or during the screenings. Films in music halls would incidentally be viewed embedded in bills of live turns, but in traveling shows live performers would support films as the main entertainment. Rather than merely "dressing" films, each of these four figures would, in varying proportions, Kember remarks, anchor audiences' interpretations of the shows.[12] Showpeople in particular created stories about the provenance of the films that were most suited to their attempts to generate a rapport with the audience. They were "responsible" for the images in the sense of being answerable for them, and there is also evidence that exhibitors were prepared to present themselves as "responsible" for the images by claiming to have produced them. In July 1907 an operator wrote to *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* to advise other exhibitors about intertitles: "The strip of title film is usually inartistic and often disfigured by a too obvious trade mark. One firm's titles are particularly obnoxious for this reason, and I invariably detach them, as I think it mistaken policy to let the public know that one is showing the products of two or three firms. I prefer to foster the harmless delusion that all have been made by myself, which adds to the respect paid to the show."[13] In June 1907 one journalist noted that "[t]he most elaborate 'fit up' on a fair ground, after the 'roundabouts,' is usually belonging to 'So and so's living pictures' and one easily realizes that the latter have become the 'star' turn by the generous patronage extended to them."[14] The cinematograph show was afforded the rank of "star," but only at the point of exhibition, from which the represented bodies were far removed. The showpeople in particular achieved celebrity status at the local and regional level. As Kember explains, "[t]he names of eminent showmen were well known to the public, and were often as widely mythologized as picture personalities were to become."[15] Thus when the cinematograph first appeared as an element of fairgrounds and traveling shows in 1897, it was already connected with systems of celebrity *and* personality, and this system had at least to weaken for another order of celebrities to emerge.

(3) For as long as films categorized amongst the factual genres were in a majority, those films in which the contrived performance of the filmed body might be perceived as a particularly filmic act were in a minority in most film programs, limiting the cinematograph's potential to build celebrity on filmed bodies. In the United Kingdom, the dominance of factual genres in film programs lasted until roughly early 1907.

(4) From 1897, and even as the proportion of "arranged" films in film programs increased from the mid-1900s, one major "arranged" genre was the "trick" film. In June 1906, one commentator divided "made-up" films into three genres: "sensational, comic, and trick";[16] in September 1906 the R. W. Paul company used the three genres of "comic," "trick," and "miscellaneous";[17] and even in February 1907 Urban's fictional output was headed "Humorous and Magical."[18] With their illusions of reversal, transformation, appearance/disappearance, acceleration/deceleration, and levitation, trick films "confronted" their audiences as products of work that included manipulating the film strip during and after filming. They threw attention on to the invisible manipulator, rather than visible performers, as the real-life person responsible for the film, and they also cued viewers to regard images of filmed bodies as functions of the apparatus rather than products of controlled performances. Even following the emergence of the "drama" category in mid-1907, not only were trick films still widely made, trick effects migrated into "straight" dramas and comedies and were still being used well into 1909.

(5) For Kember, "this paradigmatically modern industry thrived because it successfully personalized certain aspects of its products,"[19] and this "personality" was not restricted to exhibition personnel. Local films, for example, at their zenith at the turn of the century, sought to satisfy the perceived urge to encounter selves rather than shadows by offering the opportunity to recognize acquaintances. Nonetheless, the human "aspect" that audiences derived from films themselves was as likely to come from what Kember calls "authorial personae" as it was from filmed performers. Where films prompted viewers to attribute

responsibility for the film to an originating “self,” this was frequently the “self” of the film’s *implied* originator. Personhood was discovered in the overtly presentational processes that audiences discovered in and attributed to films, bypassing the filmed body and implying a form of personality not associated with real people. In performed film, Kember identifies such common authorial personae as “the joke teller” and “the conjuror” (as distinct from the real-life post-production manipulator discussed above). These particular forms of attributed authorial personae were derived from the tendency in filmmaking toward “monstration”: that is, an implicit act of gesturing towards or pointing out.[20] The monstrative bent of showpeople and lecturers, who drew on career experience in forms of visual entertainment founded on exhibitionism, was doubled in these authorial personae, so that personality was discovered in an edit used to show, in reverse angle, sights unseen by a certain character (the confidant) or in an iris used to show a view through a keyhole (the pornographer). As long as these monstrative figures were implicit in films, audiences were diverted from crediting visible bodies with responsibility for on-screen meaning. Admittedly, some films appointed on-screen proxies for their authorial personae (including the conjurers in George Méliès’s magic films, most of whom were “played” by Méliès himself), and performers usually aligned themselves with authorial personae when they looked straight at the camera to smile or wink. But even such visible persons would have been regarded by audiences as visual echoes of the film’s implicit presenting “self,” and not as responsible for the film.

(6) While the version of intra-filmic celebrity that *did* emerge identified film performers as actors, there was no particular reason why filmic celebrity could not be cultivated out of, for example, dance. Films reproducing entire performances by variety performers, such as *The Deonzo Brothers in their Wonderful Jumping Act* (R. W. Paul, 1901), iterated film’s ability to present a celebrity’s full performance. But in the period before the rise of predominantly fictional films, although performances undertaken by those bodies appearing in films *were* often the object of praise, indicating that film performance could be lauded as requiring talent (the basis of any form of celebrity), many different

performance types were employed in “arranged” filmmaking. Although some of these, such as posing or performing in a sketch, could be grouped under acting, many more could not, and these included mime, caricature and typage, slapstick, acrobatics, impersonation, pageantry, life modeling, escapology, tableaux vivants, erotic performance, mugging, mummery, prestidigitation, and play-fighting. As Kember notes, “[a]lthough they first appeared quite early, techniques of dramatic characterisation … are only sporadically present or, at least, very difficult to unpick from other modes of performance, in the first ten years of British filmmaking.”[21] This liberal mix meant that no single performance norm was available to provide a definition of distinctly filmic talent. Even story films did not shoulder out non-histrionic forms of performance. For example, as late as April 1907 one writer, describing Pathé’s four-minute *La cuisine hantée* (*The Haunted Kitchen*), in which two demons play pranks on the chef, noted that the demons “are evidently very gifted contortionists and the manner in which they twist their limbs and bodies gives the proper magical atmosphere to the subject.”[22] With so many scales of performance quality apparent in films, a single, or singularly filmic, account could not form the basis for a system of celebrity.

(7) Even in the case of those films that audiences could identify as dramatic fiction, the film process provided some resistance to attempts to import notions of performance. For example, while there was obvious work involved for a theater actor or a music hall sketch artiste to consistently reproduce a certain performance, the work of duplicating a filmed performance was undertaken by an industrial process and the work of reproducing it by a machine. The writer of one February 1907 article remarked that “[a]t a well-known London Variety Theatre, the lowering of the sheet for the bioscope show, is the signal for those at the bars to desert them and secure a seat. The living pictures have each week the same effect as a £100 a week star. Some day – in the far distant future – other managers will realize that the public prefers a *good* bioscope show to an indifferent artiste with an indifferent song.”[23] Even though the cinematograph’s novelty period was a distant memory by this point, its appeal still lay in its

presentational aspects, rather than performance occurring during filming, hence the contrast between the show and live performers, even though the former is here described as more popular.

It is possible to imagine a situation in which none of these seven circumstances applied, but it does not follow that in such a situation an order of intrinsic film celebrities would have emerged with little delay. Although accounts of celebrity were established in the institutions of music hall and theater that could be "copied" onto film performance, and although it could be argued that, given time, one of the models of personhood that obtained in preexisting and culturally dominant institutions would have colonized film discourse, even in 1908 there was no immediate commercial motive for film production companies to publicize the appearance in a film of somebody whose name was not already known. A very particular train of events changed this.

A New Industry

Richard deCordova claims that "'individuals' appeared in films for over ten years before the notion that they were actors began to be put forward" because a photographic discourse on the act of "being filmed" had to wane before a theatrical discourse could emerge.[24] In the United Kingdom, however, a discourse on film acting does not seem to have been absent before the point in mid-1907 when deCordova first identifies it in the United States. When, at the beginning of 1897, cinema's novelty phase waned, public attention began to shift to the subject matter represented, and several British producers began to specialize in "invented subjects," contemporaries were already prepared to use elements of a histrionic vocabulary to refer to the activities involved. In March 1897, Cecil Hepworth, at the time an experienced lanternist turning his hand to projecting films, wrote that he had recently projected "some pictures which might be described as being of an episodal nature – far more interesting than the interminable street scenes of which there are so many about. These were little comedies in one short act.… Well acted and staged, so to speak, they were calculated to please the most exacting."[25] Though it was rare for

popular commentaries at the time to mention acting, and though histrionic vocabulary was often qualified, it was not unknown, and versions of the "mistaken for reality" anecdote that deCordova regards as a symptom of the emergence of the idea that film performance constituted acting were already circulating in the United Kingdom in December 1904.[26] Certainly by June 1906 a *Strand* contributor was familiar enough with the idea that film performance was acting to structure an article on filmmaking around the contrast between the drama as it would appear to the film viewer and the deeds carried out by the performers in contriving the appearances of drama.[27] In contrast to deCordova's account of the situation in the United States, in the United Kingdom a discourse on acting that constituted *some* film performance as a matter of histrionics was accommodated. Notably, though, it did not lead to the emergence of an order of "picture personalities." A number of shifts in the institution had to occur for this situation to come about, and these began in 1907.

Some of these shifts represent no more than the transformation of the circumstances described above, such as the rise of the fiction genre in film programs. During the first phase of this new phenomenon, the overwhelming majority of "arranged" films were comedies. In August 1907 one industry commentator remarked on the ubiquity of comic films, specifically the chase film.[28] Comic films did not prevent commentators from using accounts of acting. One April 1905 trade synopsis of Warwick's *The Jail-Bird; or the Bishop and the Convict*, for example, told how the titular characters were compelled to impersonate each other: "As these two parts were played by artistes of the highest professional talent, these traits [the bishop's dignity and the jail-bird's criminality] are most clearly brought out in the film and will cause any audience viewing the subject to be in roars of laughter from start to finish."[29] Impersonation was regarded as comically useful. During 1907–8 a general cooling toward comic films was expressed, however, and releases show a gradual shift toward films classed as dramas and melodramas. Rather than showing the interaction of events with accident or habit, these genres were structured around the interaction between events and character traits, and allusions to acting featured far

more frequently in synopses for dramas and melodramas than they did in synopses for comedies.

The new development of the “picture theatre” first received notice in the trade press in July 1907. While film-only venues and film-only shows were already known, at the beginning of 1908 the cinematograph was still firmly embedded in preexisting cultural spheres. After private investment was first successfully attracted to a number of new “picture theatre” companies during 1908 and 1909, a torrent of these new film-only venues provided new exhibition conditions for film across the country. The number of picture theaters licensed to show films first outnumbered preexisting venues showing films in 1911.[30] Picture theaters showed different films in one place (in contrast to traveling outfits, which toured the same film to different places for as long as possible), thereby ensuring a steady turnover of films for the locality. In late 1910 producers began to adopt a system of twice-weekly release dates in order to supply the twice-weekly program change that was emerging as a norm in picture theaters. A film change of sufficient frequency was necessary to give enough audience members enough of a chance to see several films within a sufficiently short time to recognize a performer from film to film. The picture theater was also the most important force in generating a “public,” a recognizable body of consumers constituting a market toward which production companies could project an increased range of film “product.” The picture theater also fueled demand for fiction films, as films of unpredictable or intermittent topical events could not provide a steady supply of film product.

Also, even though mean film duration had been increasing sporadically since 1896, in 1906 mean duration amongst domestic productions was still just 5.04 minutes. Further increases, including rapid increases in 1907–8 and 1909–10, brought mean film duration to 9.52 minutes in 1911.[31] With this near doubling of mean film duration, a film show of standard length would consequently contain roughly half the number of films and, therefore, fewer filmed bodies tussling for recognition and status. In addition, longer films enabled more detailed exploration of fictional character and so, in turn, of the work behind these explorations.

Although the presence of live accompaniment of the image lasted into the picture theater period, these new venues channeled showpersonship into the

manager's relationship with his regular patrons and lessened the role of lecturers and effects people. A January 1908 article recommending sound effects as essential to the completion of a film also advised subtlety and perfect synchronization with on-screen action.[32] Although, during 1908–9, many lecturers found work as "explainers" to smooth audiences' acclimatization to the gradual increase in film length, even the "explainer" directed attention "inwards" toward the film's narrative thread, and at the beginning of 1909 some commentators were already remarking that narrative films were independent of external exposition.[33] As the 1910s began, lecturers found their remits had shrunk to factual genres. Already in June 1909 it was remarked that the lecturer "is rather the exception than the rule" in the United Kingdom, and while "in the provinces there seems an increasing tendency to accompany the pictures with 'explanatory remarks'," this writer knew of no film shows in London currently employing lecturers.[34] By May 1910 one journalist was instructing lecturers never to obtrude their personalities on their audiences, never to try to synchronize their voice with on-screen actors, to restrict themselves to storytelling and to exercise restraint when lecturing to dramas in particular, given that dramas required viewers to submit to the sense of illusion and that conspicuous lecturing would interfere with this.[35]

The impetus to extract one of the many performance styles latent in staged films as a solely "filmic" exploit first emerged in the middle of 1906, when the industry began to shift to regard film acting as a pertinent scale of quality. Existing scales of quality included photographic clarity, excitement, precision and appropriateness of coloring, interest, the "well worked out" plot, and even scenery and staging, but, in the summaries of films printed in the *Optical Lantern and Cinematograph/Kinematograph Journal* and its successor *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, acting very rarely ranked alongside these other qualities before July 1906. That month, a description of Hepworth's *The Pirate Ship* included the remark that "the acting of the characters is well above the average, the *abandon* of the heroine adding considerably to the success of the subject,"[36] and copy in the three subsequent monthly issues identified acting as a relevant scale of quality. Although the writer here refers to the acting of the characters rather than the

performers, the magazine's contributors gradually became more fluent in citing histrionic polish in films. In March 1907, summarizing Pathé's four-part *Vie et Passion de Notre Sauveur Jésus-Christ* (*The Life of Christ*) (just under an hour long in total), a contributor noted that "[t]he acting is of the highest professional order, and, as far as we were able to detect, not a single accident or awkwardness on the part of the actors occurred during the entire performance."[37] Such assessments began to pile up in the trade press. In July 1907 it was remarked that, in Pathé's roughly seven-minute comedy *Domestique hypnotiseur* (*The Servant Hypnotist*), "[t]he acting throughout the scenes is of the cleverest."[38] In August 1907 the reviewer of Urban's *Love Conquers All* singled the film out as "notable for acting much above the average of that to which we are accustomed in films,"[39] and another remarked in the same month that the films released under the Urban-Eclipse brand, "as examples of staging and good acting, have been equal to anything which has issued from Paris.… 'The Foster Parent' is a capital example … a good story being greatly helped by the skill of those impersonating the characters."[40] That producers and trade journalists increasingly mentioned the quality of acting in their synopses indicates that, in their view, exhibitors regarded it as an important index for distinguishing between subjects, which in turn suggests that acting was beginning to constitute a scale of quality in popular perceptions of film also.

This constitutes the earliest evidence that acting was construed as a production value, even though the identity of the actors was not. But this new scale does not evidence the maturation of either film discourse or film audiences. Film acting was being asserted as a scale of quality because acting was a function of fiction-producing and so could provide the industry with much-sought-after cultural status. Production companies were also pursuing higher cultural status for their products by, for example, giving characters' names, in place of designations and types, in their synopses and intertitles. It was not necessary for a discourse specifically on acting to concretize for a system of film celebrity to emerge. It is possible to envision any of the versions of film performance that circulated in the period before 1910 forming the basis for an order of celebrities. Even after the picture personality emerged in the United Kingdom, there were still several very

different regimes of performance type in films; by being regarded as a scale of quality, however, "acting" unified these into one profession. In August 1907, for example, a synopsis of Pathé's comic film *Le jongleur monomane* (*The Maniac Juggler*) included the remark that "[t]he actor is not only a good juggler, with the skill to conceal his skill, but a clever comedian, and his mishaps should be the cause of great laughter wherever they are shown."[41] Comedy skills and juggling, for this writer, were encompassed by the term "actor."

In addition, in the period from late 1905 to early 1910, competition between the production companies releasing films in the United Kingdom intensified significantly. After early resistance, by April 1907 all companies selling films in the United Kingdom had converted from per-subject pricing, which had averaged around 6 pence per foot, to a standard of 4 pence per foot regardless of subject. So many companies from the United Kingdom and Europe were competing for the attention of exhibitors that complaints of over-production emerged in the summer of 1907.[42] In addition, late 1907 and early 1908 also saw the emergence of a substantial film hiring industry. Although the first hiring firm was established in the United Kingdom in 1901, exhibitors still routinely bought films outright from producers until late 1907. The widespread onset of hiring drastically reduced the number of prints of a film that the production companies could sell and thus limited the revenue that they could exact from each outlay on production. With the prices that they could ask for their films standardized at 4 pence per foot by competition, and with their products being exploited by companies other than themselves, production companies were seeking out methods both for increasing the revenue they could extract from each film *and* for building their brand identity with the public so as to create an audience/exhibitor demand that would require the hiring firms to buy their films rather than those of others. Strategies adopted included forming associations to place conditions on hirers and exhibitors, and the system of leasing films to hirers rather than selling them (first attempted no later than early 1910).[43] But this situation also pushed the production companies toward the profitability of publicizing regular performers, who could provide a way of indelibly trademarking films, where brand logos on titles and intertitles were unreliable because titles and intertitles could be

removed, and where brands on sets could be scratched out of the film. By contrast, hirers and exhibitors couldn't remove performers, or even scratch them out, and still have a product. These limitations also prompted a search for product lines *other than films* that production companies could manufacture and sell, preferably products that could be generated by their existing operations without increasing operating costs. Given that product lines such as projectors and film winders had a small market, the ideal product would be sold to the general public. The consumer goods that music halls sold to their audiences, such as sheet music and postcards of the stars, would have provided models to copy in such an expansion of operations.

Production companies searching for new methods of retaining control of films also sought to provide intra-filmic equivalents for lecturers and showpeople, or otherwise render lecturers and showpeople redundant. In both native and imported films, the development of new narrative methods in film during 1908 and 1909 was linked to this effort. Editing and cinematography conventions absorbed the functions of real-life and textual narrators, quietening both these "point-of-sale" narrators and the authorial personae "behind" films by embedding narration in structure. As Kember points out, "lecturing practices were significantly weakened in Britain by 1909," and "the roles that lecturers had traditionally sought to fulfill effectively moved backwards through the industry, from institutions of exhibition to distribution and production."[44] Lastly, a shot distance in which the figure left little vertical empty space was generally adopted in comedies and dramas only by 1910. A sufficiently short average shot distance made it physically possible to see enough detail in performers' faces to be able to recognize them the next time they appeared in a film, even if their roles (and so behavior, costume, and make-up) differed wildly between films, although they tended not to.

A Prehistory of the Picture Personality

Given the conditions brought about by these long-term transformations, it would seem likely that a system of intrinsic film celebrity was just around the corner, particularly given that a version of celebrity which foregrounded the strength of personality was already a significant factor of the music hall institution.[45] Nonetheless, a number of specific events functioned as precipitating causes for the emergence of film celebrity.

The first was the appearance in the United Kingdom, from June 1908 to early 1910, of a number of films exploiting performers borrowed from the legitimate stage as a production value. As Jon Burrows notes, the first of these films, produced by the British branch of Gaumont, independently of the French parent company, predated the November 1908 debut in the United Kingdom of the more prestigious French "films d'art" – which deCordova singles out as a major influence on the emergence of the notion of film celebrity in the United States – by five months.[46] The first was Gaumont's *Roméo et Juliette* (*Romeo and Juliet*), released on June 17, 1908 (see Figure 24.1). The completeness of the film was emphasized – all five acts of the original had been "cinematographed by us" – and players associated with the recent production at the Lyceum were advertised (although, as Burrows indicates, the stars of the Lyceum version, Matheson Lang and Norah Kerin, seem to have refused Alfred Bromhead's proposal to feature in the film, hence the use of Tearle and Malone, junior members of the company).[47] Gaumont did not seek to charge a higher price per foot, the intention behind the extra expenditure being instead to stimulate a demand for more copies. This strategy continued with *Napoleon and the English Sailor* on July 6, 1908, a roughly nine-minute adaptation of a ballad by Herbert Darnley in which Darnley took the lead role. The film opens with a title card announcing Darnley followed by a "credit" shot of him facing the camera. Gaumont maintained this association with Darnley, releasing a roughly nine-minute version of his famous sketch *Moving In*, performed by members of his own company, in late July/early August 1908. In November 1908 they released a film version of George Sims' short story "Lady Letmere's Jewellery," starring stage actress Maisie Ellis. It was noted that "[a]ctors and actresses of note have been employed throughout and before the commencement of the picture we are introduced to the leading characters, as a special portrait study, in which their names, together with

the parts they play, are stated."[48] Again the modest fame of the performers was less important than the idea that Gaumont's films warranted the employment of stage professionals. In the case of *Lady Letmere's Jewellery*, Gaumont also refused to sell copies, distributing the film solely through their own film hiring subsidiary. The last of Gaumont's run of prestige films was *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, released in February 1909, also featuring named junior actors associated with the Lyceum.[49]

Figure 24.1 Advertisement for Gaumont, *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* 3, no. 57 (June 11, 1908): 91.

The Sensation of 1908.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

The famous Tragedy in Five Acts, by Shakespeare,

CINEMATOGRAPHED BY US.

We have eclipsed all previous efforts, and the tragedy has been produced on a scale of **magnificence** never before attempted. The results are beyond all **expectations.**

READY WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17th.

Over 40 of London's

FOREMOST ARTISTES

have taken part in this representation, the majority of whom were engaged in the recent

Lyceum Theatre Production.

The Dances and Fights are **Triumphs of Grouping** and the tragedy teems with irresistible movement and life.

READY WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17th.

ROMEO	...	Mr. GODFREY TEARLE.
JULIET	...	Miss MARY MALONE.
MERCUTIO	...	Mr. GORDON BAILEY.
TYBALT	...	Mr. J. ANNAND.

Telegrams—**Chronophone, London.** Telephone—**2430 Gerrard.**

THE GAUMONT CO.,

The Cinematograph Specialists,

CHRONO HOUSE, 5 & 6, Sherwood St., & 18, Denman St.,

PICCADILLY CIRCUS, LONDON, W.

Tel. Bioscope, Glasgow. **Glasgow Office—142, TRONGATE.** Phone 787 Tron.

And at PARIS, BERLIN, BARCELONA, BRUSSELS, MILAN, MOSCOW, and NEW YORK.

Although the Pathé-distributed “films d’art” (the first of which arrived in the United Kingdom in November 1908), which all featured named stage

and variety performers and were accompanied by national press coverage, were much more plentiful than these British Gaumont precursors, the phenomenon was soon widespread, with Itala, Éclair, Cines, and Vitagraph all releasing films under an "Art Film" or "High Art" label in the United Kingdom by the end of April 1909. Although Pathé was still the only company publicizing the names and affiliations of the featured actors in these films in April, at the end of May Vitagraph announced the appearance of William Humphreys in *Napoleon*, playing on Humphreys' work as Napoleon on Broadway in *More than Queen*, a play about the Empress Josephine starring the distinguished actress Julia Arthur.[50] Vitagraph's subsequent publicity for the more prestigious Elita Proctor Otis's appearance as Nancy Sykes in *Oliver Twist*, noted as a major stepping stone in the United States by deCordova, occurred in the United Kingdom in July 1909, just eleven weeks later than in the United States.[51] This generation of "art films" worked to impress upon commentators that regular film performers and stage celebrities were working in the same sphere, doubling the strength of the idea that acting provided films with one of its main scales of quality. In June 1908 one reviewer remarked that "[t]he production of Romeo and Juliet is so finely accurate in its leading details, and the scenery, costumes and acting so realistic, that we sit and forget for the time that we are looking at Kinematograph art, but fancy ourselves seated in a theatre.… The acting of the several artistes is superb, the scenery is magnificent and the photographic quality is perfect."[52] The appearance of this trope of forgetting that one is watching a film (a common method for lauding quality at the time) suggests that viewers were being cued by such films to reduce the attention they paid to the creativity of the technical process and to attend to the performances of filmed bodies. Although it both fostered a habit of naming players and provided a model for long-term methods of achieving sought-after exclusivity, this phase of "Art" filmmaking using one-off or short-term theatrical borrowings also worked, however, to forestall the idea that film's habitual bodies could be the subject of a discourse of celebrity, because it implied that enhancing the quality of films required the use of performers borrowed from other spheres.

More instrumental to the emergence of cinematic celebrity in the United Kingdom was the emergence of the film series, the phenomenon of

featuring the same character and story space across multiple discrete films. While in the summer of 1908 the UK public had already had the opportunity to notice at least two characters casually featured in more than one film (Gaumont's "Algy" and Nordisk's "Happy Bob," both comic characters, appeared in August 1907 and May 1908 and March and July 1908, respectively), the first deliberately publicized series character in the United Kingdom was Éclair's Nick Carter, who first appeared in *Nick Carter: King of Detectives*, released in the United Kingdom in late September 1908 (see Figure 24.2). The UK trade noted that this film "marks a new departure in the film business in that it is the first of a series of films in which the various exciting adventures of one character are to be illustrated."[53] Carter, it was noted, "will make periodical appearances in films just as the famous Sherlock Holmes did in each month's *Strand*."[54] A full series of six Nick Carter films, in all of which Pierre Bressol played the eponymous detective, was released in the United Kingdom by the end of November. A number of other European producers quickly released their own series, and by the end of 1910 audiences in the United Kingdom had been exposed to *at least* eleven appearances of Nick Carter and encountered, in order of their first appearance, Sherlock Holmes (five films by Nordisk), Rifle Bill (five films by Éclair), Foolshead (forty-two films by Itala), Morgan the Pirate (three films by Éclair), Professor Puddenhead (three films by Urban), Three-Fingered Kate (four films by British & Colonial), Lieutenant Rose (six films by Clarendon), Calino (nineteen films by Gaumont), Dr Phantom (six films by Warwick), Tontolini (thirty films by Cines), Betty (four films by Pathé), Frightened Freddy (three films by Clarendon), Lea (three films by Cines), and Tweedledum (three films by Ambrosio), among others. Notably, none of the American production companies exporting to the United Kingdom produced any series until Essanay released its first Broncho Billy film in October 1910; deCordova does not regard the series protagonist as an important force in the United States.

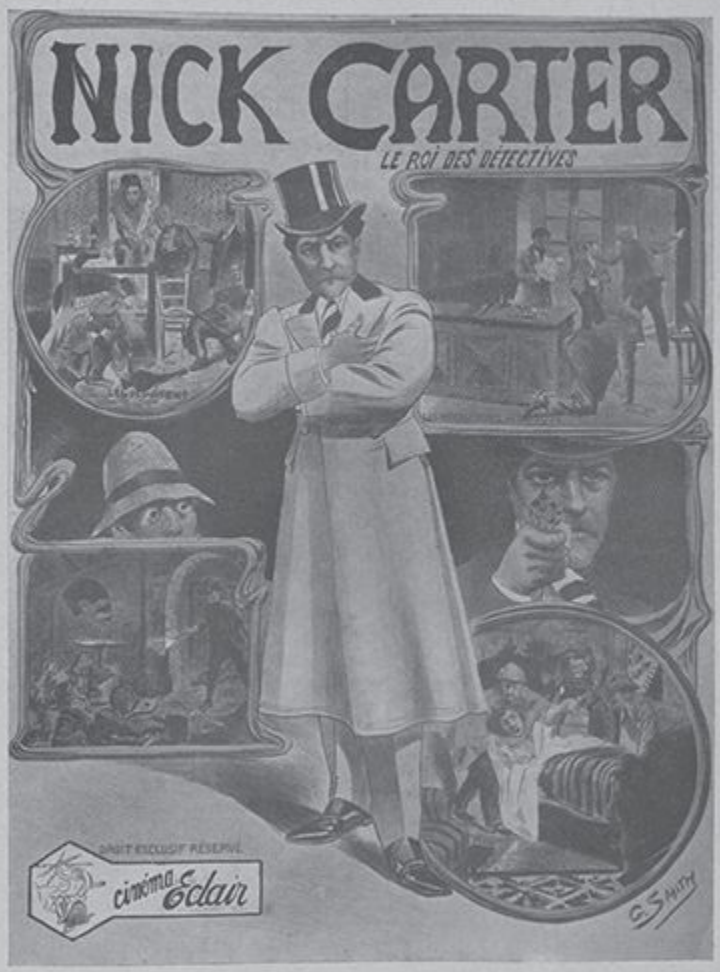
Figure 24.2 "Remarkable Film Subjects no. 9. 'Nick Carter, the King of Detectives,'" *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* 3, no. 72 (September 24, 1908): 453.

Remarkable Film Subjects.

No. 9.

"Nick Carter, the King of Detectives."

(Eclair Film issued by Walter Tyler, Ltd.)



This subject well deserves inclusion in our series of films of particular merit. It is not only of good and level photographic quality, but possesses a vivid plot, and in addition to this, marks a new departure in the film business in that it is the first of a series of films in which the various exciting adventures of one character are to be illustrated.

The leading figure in the series is to be a detective of infinite resource and courage. This character, which is remarkably well acted in the film under consideration, is known as "Nick Carter"—a name which savours rather of the penny dreadful it is true, but which has associations in the average person's mind, which should be helpful to the showman. He will make periodical appearances in films just as the famous Sherlock Holmes did in each month's *Strand*, and we can imagine, if the subsequent subjects keep up to the standard of the first, that a showman featuring the "adventures" as they appear, will have an item likely to secure many regular patrons.

A full description of the first adventure appeared in last week's issue, but one or two points in the subject call for special commendation. The first is, as we have said, the acting of the detective. Several interesting instances of this actor's cleverness occur in the course of the film — as when on the track of the old hag who has decoyed the doctor to the "thieves' kitchen," he pretends to be rummaging in the gutter each time she turns to see if he is following. The staging also calls for comment and in the scene in which the detective, disguised as the hag, throws fresh fuel in the brazier, the effect of the sudden red glow is cleverly obtained by tinting.

On this page we illustrate a poster for this series which may be obtained from Messrs. Tyler.

NOTICE.

We have received so many demands for advertising space in our special enlarged issue, announced for next week, and there are so many matters of general trade interest "on the way" that we are compelled to postpone the publication of this issue. We have received much interesting matter from various firms and persons in the trade, and shall be glad to hear from others, who have not yet communicated with us. Advertising space for this issue should be booked immediately, as it is limited, and as several firms have taken as many as five pages, it will be seen that it is in great demand.

This Journal is on sale at W. H. Smith & Sons' Bookstalls; or is sent post free weekly from the Publishers for 6/6 per ann.

The series was itself a recent literary invention. It appeared for the first time, memorably, in the *Strand* in July 1891, shortly after the magazine's launch in January, in the form of Arthur Conan Doyle's "A Scandal in

Bohemia." Here Doyle provided Sherlock Holmes, already known in the United Kingdom from two novels serialized in periodicals in 1887 and 1890, with a very brief adventure totaling some 8,000 words. Holmes appeared in twenty-three short stories in the *Strand* before his "death" in December 1893, and then a further thirty-three *Strand* short stories followed his return in October 1903. Other well-known series protagonists of the era included Doyle's Napoleonic soldier Étienne Gerard and E. W. Hornung's gentleman thief Raffles. The series' emergence as a literary convention was a direct result of the rise of the new generation of short story magazines of the 1890s, as they provided a way of achieving customer loyalty while avoiding, in contrast to the serialized novel, the need to have read previous issues of the periodical. The film industry's foray into the field of the series character seems to have been an attempt to create a similar form of product loyalty, rather than a deliberate commitment to marketing their performer employees, but it established a cinema publicity method in which selves were used to acquire patronage. Admittedly, for almost a year none of the actors regularly playing series characters was publicly named, and most remained anonymous for over two years. Conceptually, however, the film series was a radical phenomenon, in that it provided circumstances in which one film-only performer (or very few) would appear repeatedly in the same role. Viewers were thus cued to assess a performer's achievement of character consistency over time, an activity usually absent from film consumption. Attention drawn to characters' abilities across films was attention paid to performers' abilities across films. For example, in January 1909 the fourth *Rifle Bill* film, *The Spectre of the Plains*, was described as "[a]nother fine picture illustrating an exploit of this famous character.… A fine chase follows in which the rovers one after another fall victim to Rifle Bill's unerring revolver."[55] Because Rifle Bill's daring was rooted in the labor of the performer (Henri Gouget), the repetition of the character – which, for this trade journalist, made Rifle Bill "famous" – was also repetition of the labor involved in producing the character.

In addition, the series also permitted recognition of performers even if faces were not sufficiently legible. When Nordisk began a Nat Pinkerton series in February 1909, a *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* contributor noted that "we recognise the gentleman who impersonated Sherlock

Holmes for this firm, under a new name."[56] This was the first statement that a viewer had recognized a film-only performer ever to appear in the magazine. It was Nick Carter/Pierre Bressol who received the earliest known European example of a letter inquiring after the real name of a film performer, a love letter from a Finnish woman dated December 1, 1909, less than a month after the earliest known equivalent in the United States.[57] The appearance of series protagonists in film also provided viewers with the clearest evidence that certain film companies had regular actor/performer employees. In describing Itala's *Cretinetti* (*Foolshead*) films in March 1909, another journalist noted that "[t]he chief character is enacted by a delightfully humorous performer, who does not spare himself in the endeavour to secure the maximum amount of humour from each scene."[58] In January 1910 one article alluded to "the 'Nick Carter' artiste."[59] By September 1909, even though the name of the Foolshead performer (André Deed) was still not yet publicly known, advertising for his films called him "[t]he most famous picture comedian in the world."[60] In these ways, the series protagonist prompted and promoted the *idea* of a film performer. In addition, for picture personalities to emerge, producers had to regard audience recognition of a figure *from films alone* as possible, and the series characters provided the production companies with their clearest evidence of this. For example, in a November 1909 advertisement for American Biograph (who at the time released no series in the United Kingdom) featuring testimonials from cinema managers, none mentioned the recognition of the players as an aspect of the audience's admiration for "AB" films,[61] but in a trade synopsis for *Cretinetti ceremonioso* (*Foolshead Ceremonious*), released shortly afterwards, it was advised that "[t]hose who have seen the earlier Foolshead subjects should not miss the adventure of this popular character issued by Messrs. Tyler this week.… [D]isplaying the old favourite in quite a new guise, [it] should be extremely popular with his many English admirers."[62]

Although the idea that acting constituted a scale of quality had shaped film discourse in the United Kingdom for over two years without motivating producers to publicly name their players, it was the series that

gave the United Kingdom its first intra-filmic celebrity: Max Linder. While this series, released under the Pathé-distributed "Film d'Art" label, had no name in the United Kingdom, it featured a rich, leisured young Parisian bourgeois investor, played by Linder, whom Pathé named "Max," and Linder's own name first appeared in publicity for these comedies in the British trade press on their arrival in September 1909 and consistently featured in trade publicity for the rest of this unofficial series, which persisted until roughly June 1910.[63] Because Linder did not play a titular character, film viewers' attention could dwell more on the consistency of the performer than on the repeated fictional character.

In the following month Pathé's rival, Éclair, announced the names of the two unknown principals in *Remords* (*The Remorse*), one of whom was Pierre Bressol, and in February 1910 Pathé began to release more previously unknown names in a synopsis for an adaptation of Balzac's *La duchesse de Langeais*, released in the United Kingdom on February 26, 1910: "introducing M. André Calmettes and Mdlle. [Germaine] Dermoz in the leading characters."[64] Given that, at the time, Pathé was still distributing films which employed known theater actors, and was stating their names and affiliations in synopses, it was a significant leap to begin germinating publicity for players who were *not* previously known. The series format provided the motives for this leap.

The Place of the United States

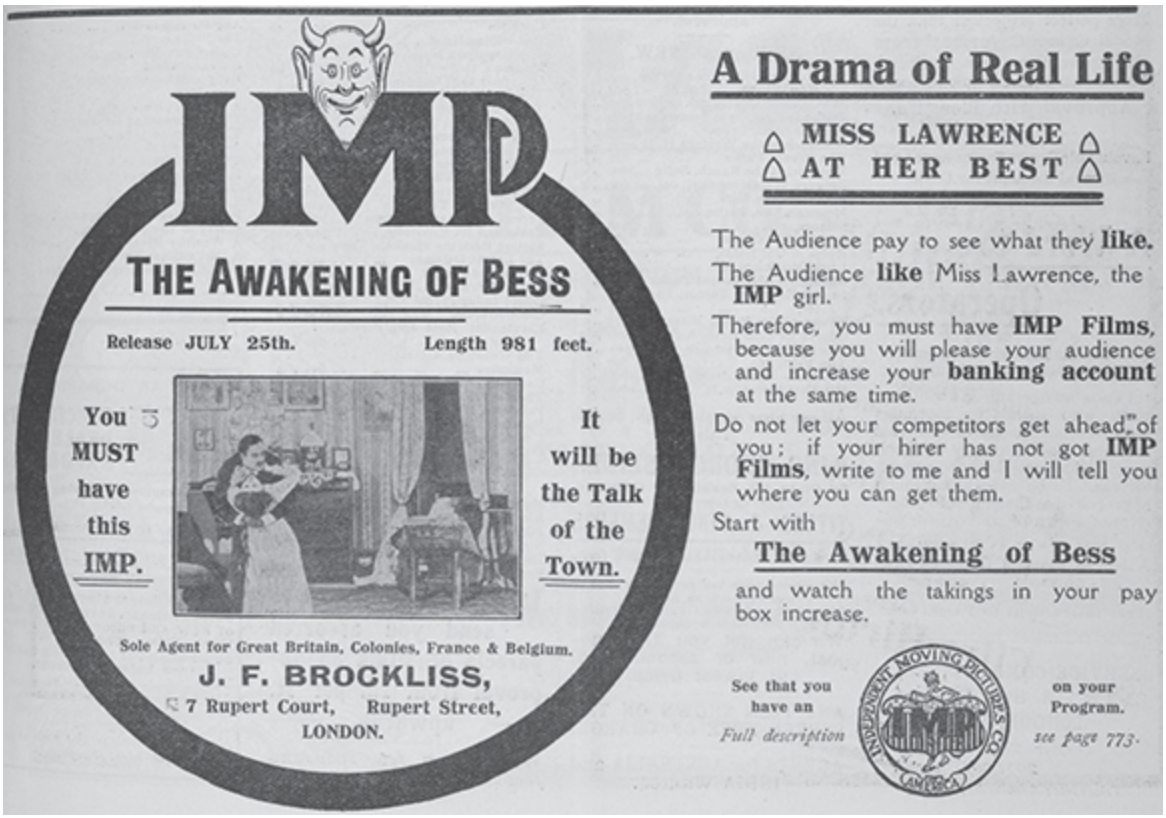
Although one might justifiably expect the opening salvos of the US's competitive publicizing of "picture personalities" to have provided the first instances of such marketing in the United Kingdom, the priorities of American companies seem to have been different internationally. Richard deCordova has shown that well before the March 5, 1910 "We Nail a Lie" stunt in which the IMP company, headed by Carl Laemmle, commenced concerted trade publicity for Florence Lawrence, Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC) members Kalem and Edison were already sporadically informing at least the trade press about the identities of members of their stock companies. The Edison company, for example, provided *Motion*

Picture World with a list of the cast of *Ethel's Luncheon* in September 1909, and published full cast lists for its current releases in two issues of the *Edison Kinetogram*, starting in the same month.[65] In addition, on August 1, 1909 Edison also advertised, to the trade, the appearance of Miss Cecil Spooner, a legitimate stage actress, in *The Prince and the Pauper*, and the appearance in seven films, starting in November 1909, of the French-born pantomime artist Mademoiselle Pilar-Morin. In the United Kingdom, however, of these publicity efforts only the Spooner appearance and the first of the Pilar-Morin appearances (i.e., only known celebrities) were communicated to the trade press. Edison does not seem to have seen the point of building the reputations of its regular employees outside the United States. Although Vitagraph trade gossip about social life at the Vitagraph Studio in New York named Florence Turner and Maurice Costello in January 1910, and Selig named Hobart Bosworth in trade publicity in April 1910 (presumably because, although a long-standing employee, he had previously achieved a measure of Broadway stardom),[66] these and the other MPPC companies exporting to the United Kingdom did not produce concerted publicity for their regular players there, even when Pathé and Éclair provided the example.

As deCordova implies, it was a contest between the MPPC companies and the new companies which were formed to elude and contest the MPPC's patent-based control over the hiring exchanges, companies which in September 1909 formed a rival organization, the National Independent Moving Picture Alliance (NIMPA), and in March 1910 formed the Motion Picture Distributing and Sales Company (MPDSC, a selling agent established to market their own films), that caused companies from both organizations to embark on concerted publicity campaigns for their regular players.[67] While the MPPC and NIMPA/MPDSC also locked horns in the United Kingdom, the NIMPA/MPDSC companies lagged behind the MPPC companies in establishing exports there. MPPC exports began in strength in May 1909 and non-MPPC films only began to appear in July 1910. During the year without NIMPA/MPDSC competition, the MPPC companies seem to have perceived no need to market their picture personalities in the United Kingdom.[68] The one exception is worthy of note: American Biograph

(AB). While AB was the one MPPC company *not* to begin wholeheartedly publicizing its players in the United States when this form of marketing became *de rigueur* during 1910, holding out until February 1913, in the United Kingdom it spearheaded the MPPC's publicity efforts. In May 1910 it first advertised Mary Pickford in *Twisted Trail*, released on the 15th. *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* described the film as "a powerful story illustrating the peril of condemnation on circumstantial evidence; in this picture the leading part is taken by that excellent actress Miss Dorothy Nicholson."[69] AB appears to have informed the magazine of this name via their UK agents. Although Dorothy Nicholson was a pseudonym, Mary Pickford was also a pseudonym (Pickford's real name was Gladys Smith), so it is reasonable to assume that this does not represent reluctance on the part of AB to publicize the identities of players. It was understandable that when production companies sought to develop identities for their performers, they would seek to retain these investments, and pseudonyms owned by the company provided a way to do this. This publicity for Pickford/Nicholson, which the company continued to issue in the following months, preceded IMP's first publicity for Florence Lawrence in the United Kingdom by over a month. Nonetheless, having already established the method in the United States, IMP publicized Lawrence's appearance in the first film they released in the United Kingdom, *Love's Stratagem*, released on July 7, 1910 (eight months after IMP began releasing in the United States), even innovating the idea of making Lawrence, rather than the film, the focus of their trade advertisements.[70] IMP also stressed the usefulness of a known player for achieving repeat attendance (see Figure 24.3).

Figure 24.3 Advertisement for IMP's *The Awakening of Bess*, *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* 7, no. 168 (July 28, 1910): 783. © British Library Board.


IMP
THE AWAKENING OF BESS
Release JULY 25th.
Length 981 feet.
You MUST have this IMP.
It will be the Talk of the Town.
Sole Agent for Great Britain, Colonies, France & Belgium.
J. F. BROCKLISS,
7 Rupert Court, Rupert Street,
LONDON.
A Drama of Real Life
MISS LAWRENCE AT HER BEST
The Audience pay to see what they like.
The Audience like Miss Lawrence, the IMP girl.
Therefore, you must have IMP Films, because you will please your audience and increase your banking account at the same time.
Do not let your competitors get ahead of you; if your hirer has not got IMP Films, write to me and I will tell you where you can get them.
Start with
The Awakening of Bess
and watch the takings in your pay box increase.
See that you have an
Full description
on your Program.
see page 773.

As in the United States, although IMP did not create the star system, its efforts with Lawrence, along with the appearance of four more "Independent" US companies on the UK film exhibition market (Thanhouser, Powers, and Champion all made their debuts in the United Kingdom in October 1910, and Flying "A" films were first released in January 1911, meaning that the seven MPPC companies represented in the United Kingdom now faced five MPDSC companies) seem to have prompted the MPPC to invest in wholehearted picture personality marketing in the United Kingdom. Vitagraph began to publicize Florence Turner on August 11, 1910, Kalem began to publicize Gene Gauntier on January 26, 1911, and by the end of November 1910 the editor of *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* had received press releases from Vitagraph and Edison (as well as IMP) containing biographical information about their players.[71] When he wrote to the major producers releasing in the United Kingdom for information about their players for a special issue, most of the positive responses came from American companies, and he reported a general realization that if it was available to audiences via cinema managers, autobiographical knowledge about film performers

would, as he put it, “add greater interest, and produce another tie between audience and actor.”[72] In the March 30, 1911 special issue, names, small packages of biographical information, and photographs were provided about either small groups or entire stock companies, in contrast to the existing practice of concentrating on just one or two players. These companies were, from the MPPC: Vitagraph (three players), Edison (ten), Essanay (twenty-two), Kalem (four), and Lubin (advertising its acquisition of Florence Lawrence); and, from the US “independents”: Flying “A” (five players), IMP (eighteen), and Champion (eight). From France and Denmark, Éclair and Nordisk gave names and biographies for four and three players, respectively, while Itala finally named the Foolshead performer.

Benito Nicholls, manager of Markt & Co., the UK sales agent for three of the MPPC companies, reportedly argued in April 1911 that such publicity would be generally advantageous: “My idea is that the featuring of artistes is not only desirable, but is very important and that it is appreciated by the public.”[73] Indeed, while the MPPC and MPDSC companies now began to pour publicity about their players into the trade press, Nicholls’ views seem to have been held more widely, as the first publicity for a British picture personality appeared in the trade press at the end of April 1911: photographs and biographical information about Flora Morris supplied by Hepworth.[74] It was nonetheless the Americans who initiated the final stage in the appearance of film celebrity in the United Kingdom – publicity issued specifically to the general public. The Edison company began to sell postcards of portrait photographs to cinema managers in early May 1911,[75] Vitagraph followed suit with cabinet size photographs in the same month,[76] and by the beginning of July 1911 the British agents of at least four MPPC companies (Edison, Essanay, Kalem, and Lubin) were issuing synopses to the national press, including regular players’ names.[77] Around July 1911 Nicholls set up a subsidiary, the Picture Publishing Company, which produced postcards, photographs, and brooches bearing images of AB, Kalem, and Lubin players’ faces for sale to the public; copies of the portrait photographs began to appear in the national press soon after.[78] At the end

of October 1911, when Nicholls expanded this cluster of product lines to include the UK's first popular film magazine, *The Pictures*, he was issuing postcards and photographs for every member of the Lubin and Kalem stock companies (see Figure 24.4), and around this time he even seems to have persuaded AB to publicize its whole stock company using the double-pseudonym method. The December 16 and 23, 1911 issues carried reproductions of postcards of eight AB women and ten AB men, respectively, mounted to serve as lobby displays (see Figures 24.5 and 24.6). During early 1912, picture personality publicity became the norm for all companies releasing fiction films in the United Kingdom.

Figure 24.4 Advertisement for photographs of four Lubin players, *The Pictures* 1, no. 1 (October 21, 1911), inside front cover. Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and Popular Culture, EXEBD 28302.

ALBERT McGOVERN

ARTHUR V. JOHNSON

JENNIE NELSON

FLORENCE LAWRENCE

Any one of these Photographs (size 10 inches by 8 inches), suitable for framing, sent post paid on receipt of 1/-.

PICTURE PUBLISHING CO., 88, Wardour Street, London, W.C.

Figure 24.5 *The Pictures* 1, no. 9 (December 16, 1911): ii. Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and Popular Culture, EXEBD 28310.

LEADING LADY PHOTOPLAYERS OF BIOGRAPH COMPANY.

Figure 24.6 *The Pictures* 1, no. 10 (December 23, 1911): ii. Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and Popular Culture, EXEBD 28311.

While, like most historical events, the emergence of the category of the "picture personality" in the United Kingdom was the product of a particular confluence of factors, some of these were more influential than others. International competition was fundamental. In innovating the film series Éclair sought to loosen Pathé's grip on European film markets, while the MPPC companies appear to have been prompted to begin exporting to the United Kingdom because of the conflicts between European producers during 1908 and 1909 charted by Jon Burrows.[79] They may never have even commenced this publicity in the United States had they not resolved to popularly designate Pathé's films as dangerously alien just as Pathé was introducing Max Linder to America around September 1909, a possibility that deCordova overlooks.[80] And although the inception of the series appears to have been the single most influential cause, the series was, in turn, an intermedial alliance negotiated by an industry seeking to popularly redefine the medium: one of the first deliberate, rather than spontaneous, points of intermedial contact with cognate media undertaken by the nascent institution cinema.[81]

Notes

1 Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

2 For more on the term "second birth" see André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, "A Medium is Always Born Twice …," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (May 2005): 3–15.

3 See, for example, "A Wonderful Invention," *The Sketch* 13, no. 164 (March 18, 1896): 323.

4 In April 1896 a *Chambers's Journal* contributor remarked that "Edison's beautiful optical instrument, the Kinetoscope, has now become familiar to most people through its exhibition in various large towns." "The Month," *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Art* 13, no. 643 (April 25, 1896): 267.

5 Urban was such a prominent industry figure that the author of the 1908 *Stage Year Book* even ascribed credit for the invention of cinema to him

(*The Stage Year Book* [London: Carson & Comerford, 1908], 47). He was also the first film professional to be listed in *Who's Who*, featuring in the 1909 edition ("News and Notes," *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* [hereafter *K&LW*] 4, no. 88 [January 14, 1909]: 937).

6 "The Month's New Films," *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal* [hereafter *OL&KJ*] 2, no. 10 (August 1906): 189.

7 Advertisement for The Gaumont Co., *K&LW* 1, no. 8 (July 4, 1907): 120. The list of Chronophone celebrities included Victoria Monks, Clarice Mayne, Will Evans, and R[ichard]. G[eorge]. Knowles, all referred to as "stars" (advertisement for The Gaumont Company, *K&LW* 1, no. 14 [August 15, 1907]: 216).

8 See Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 67–96.

9 George R. Sims, *Biographs of Babylon: Life-Pictures of London's Moving Scenes* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1902), viii.

10 In this chapter I make use of the term "body" rather than "person" to stress that even a sense of personhood was not a guaranteed accompaniment of the filmic image, a distinction also drawn by deCordova.

11 Joe Kember, *Marketing Modernity: Victorian Popular Shows and Early Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2009), 40–128.

12 Ibid., 59.

13 Quoted in "Helps and Hints," *K&LW* 1, no. 8 (July 4, 1907): 121.

14 Anon., "Notes on Current Topics," *K&LW* 6 (June 20, 1907): 89.

15 Kember, *Marketing Modernity*, 89.

16 "America and Moving Pictures," *OL&KJ* 2, no. 8 (June 1906): 144.

17 Advertisement for R. W. Paul, *OL&KJ* 2, no. 11 (September 1906), front cover.

18 Advertisement for Urban Productions, *OL&KJ* 3, no. 4 (February 15, 1907), inside front cover.

19 Kember, *Marketing Modernity*, 5.

20 On monstration see André Gaudreault, "Showing and Telling: Image and Word in Early Cinema," in *Early Cinema*, eds. Thomas Elsaesser with Adam Barker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 276.

21 Kember, *Marketing Modernity*, 134.
22 “New Films,” *OL&KJ* 3, no. 6 (April 15, 1907): 146.
23 “Heard on the Phone,” *OL&KJ* 3, no. 4 (February 15, 1907): 109.
24 DeCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 19.
25 Cecil M. Hepworth, “On the Lantern Screen,” *Amateur Photographer* 25, no. 648 (March 5, 1897): 186.
26 DeCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 33; “From the Editor’s Pen,” *Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal* [hereafter *OL&CJ*] 1, no. 2 (December 1904): 26–7.
27 Theodore Waters, “The Escape of the Convicts – On the Biograph,” *Strand* 31, no. 186 (June 1906): 650.
28 “Notes on Current Topics,” *K&LW* 1, no. 15 (August 22, 1907): 229.
29 “New Films,” *OL&CJ* 1, no. 6 (April 1905): 142.
30 See Nicholas Hiley, “Nothing More than a ‘Craze’: Cinema Building in Britain from 1909 to 1914,” in *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain 1896–1930*, ed. Andrew Higson (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), 111–27; esp. 114 and 120.
31 Ian Christie and John Sedgwick, “‘Fumbling Towards Some New Form of Art?’: The Changing Compositions of Film Programmes in Britain, 1908–1914,” in *Film 1900: Technology: Perception, Culture*, ed. Annemone Ligensa and Klaus Kreimeier (New Barnet: John Libbey, 2009), 155.
32 “Mechanical Effects,” *K&LW* 2, no. 37 (January 23, 1908): 183.
33 See Kember, *Marketing Modernity*, 80–1.
34 Stroller, “Weekly Notes,” *K&LW* 5, no. 110 (June 17, 1909): 253.
35 Bert Vipond, “The Art of Lecturing to Pictures,” *K&LW* 7, no. 157 (May 12, 1910): 11.
36 “The Month’s New Films,” *OL&KJ* 2, no. 9 (July 1906): 169.
37 “This Month’s New Films,” *OL&KJ* 3, no. 5 (March 15, 1907): 124.
38 “New Subjects”, *K&LW* 1, no. 11 (July 25, 1907): 174.
39 “Review of the New Subjects,” *K&LW* 1, no. 14 (August 15, 1907): 220.
40 “Latest Productions,” *K&LW* 1, no. 16 (August 29, 1907): 254.
41 “Review of the New Subjects,” *K&LW* 1, no. 12 (August 1, 1907): 191.

42 “Editorial,” *K&LW* 1, no. 12 (August 1, 1907): 177–8.

43 Advertisement for Gaumont, *K&LW* 6, no. 143 (February 3, 1910), back cover.

44 Kember, *Marketing Modernity*, 83.

45 Ibid., 146.

46 Jon Burrows, *Legitimate Cinema: Theatre Stars in Silent British Films, 1908–1918* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003), 47; deCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 37.

47 Ibid., 47.

48 “Remarkable Film Subjects. No. 19. Lady Letmere’s Jewellery,” *K&LW* 3, no. 81 (November 26, 1908): 713.

49 “News and Notes,” *K&LW* 4, no. 90 (January 28, 1909): 998–9.

50 “‘Napoleon’ Made in America,” *K&LW* 5, no. 107 (May 27, 1909): 123.

51 Advertisement for Vitagraph Headliners, *K&LW* 5, no. 115 (July 22, 1909): 524.

52 “Remarkable Film Subjects. No. 3. Romeo and Juliet,” *K&LW* 3, no. 58 (June 18, 1908): 105.

53 “Remarkable Film Subjects. No. 9. ‘Nick Carter, the King of Detectives,’” *K&LW* 3, no. 72 (September 24, 1908): 453.

54 Ibid.

55 Advertisement for Éclair, *K&LW* 4, no. 88 (January 14, 1909): 953.

56 “Remarkable Film Subjects. Nat Pinkerton,” *K&LW* 4, no. 93 (February 18, 1909): 1113.

57 “The Latest from Paris,” *K&LW* 6, no. 141 (January 20, 1910): 571; deCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 56–7.

58 “New Films and Their Makers,” *K&LW* 4, no. 98 (March 25, 1909): 1315.

59 “The Latest from Paris,” *K&LW* 6, no. 140 (January 13, 1910): 515.

60 Advertisement for Itala, *K&LW* 5, no. 125 (September 30, 1909): 1040.

61 Advertisement for Biograph, *K&LW* 6, no. 131 (November 11, 1909): 24.

62 “New Films and Their Makers,” *K&LW* 6, no. 134 (December 2, 1909): 224.

63 “New Films and Their Makers,” *K&LW* 5, no. 124 (September 23, 1909): 993. As Richard Abel indicates, Linder was France’s first film celebrity too (*The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896–1914*, 2nd ed. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998], 35, 236–40). There was no delay between advertising that mentioned him in France and advertising that mentioned him in the United Kingdom.

64 Advertisement for Éclair, *K&LW* 5, no. 126 (October 7, 1909): 1079; “New Films and Their Makers,” *K&LW* 6, no. 145 (February 17, 1910): 845.

65 DeCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 53.

66 “Trade News of the Week,” *K&LW* 6, no. 141 (January 20, 1910): 579; “New Films and Their Makers,” *K&LW* 6, no. 153 (April 14, 1910): 1301.

67 DeCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 56.

68 For the reasons for the MPPC’s temporary monopoly on US exports to the United Kingdom see Jon Burrows, “When Britain Tried to Join Europe: The Significance of the 1909 Paris Congress for the British Film Industry,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 4, no. 1 (April 2006): 1–19; and Andrew Shail, “The Motion Picture Story Magazine and the Origins of Popular British Film Culture,” *Film History* 20, no. 2 (2008): 181–97.

69 “New Films and Their Makers,” *K&LW* 7, no. 157 (May 12, 1910): 53.

70 “The First ‘IMP’ Film,” *K&LW* 7, no. 163 (June 23, 1910): 411.

71 “Weekly Notes,” *K&LW* 8, no. 185 (December 1, 1910): 5.

72 “Weekly Notes,” *K&LW* 8, no. 203 (March 30, 1911): 10.

73 Quoted in “Weekly Notes,” *K&LW* 8, no. 205 (April 13, 1911): 1553.

74 “An English Picture Actress,” *K&LW* 8, no. 207 (April 27, 1911): 1775.

75 “Edison Actors on Postcards,” *K&LW* 8, no. 209 (May 11, 1911): 8.

76 Advertisement for Vitagraph/*A Tale of Two Cities*, *K&LW* 9, no. 210 (May 18, 1911): 105.

77 L. D., “Cinematography,” *Evening Standard and St James’s Gazette*, June 24, 1911, 20; L. D., “Cinematography,” *Evening Standard and St James’s Gazette*, July 1, 1911, 20.

78 L. D., “Cinematography,” *Evening Standard and St James’s Gazette*, September 9, 1911, 20.

79 See Burrows, “When Britain Tried to Join Europe.”

80 See Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 150.

81 On “spontaneous” and “negotiated” intermediality see Gaudreault and Marion, “A Medium is always Born Twice,” 4–15.

25

The Film Lecturer

Germain Lacasse

Introduction

“Come in, come in! Animated pictures, the marvel of the century!” A large number of film lecturers undoubtedly drew audiences into their screenings of animated pictures around 1895 with harangues such as this. But their presence lasted much longer than these first appeals, and their commentary was much more diverse. Film lecturers were present in most countries, in some cases much longer than others. They are one of the most important rediscoveries of the new film history, and their study has launched research in several important aspects of the theory of early film. Their presence accounts for the style of some films which would be hard to understand without them. Film lecturers brought narrative continuity that editing was not yet able to bring; they supplied context, explaining the sources and specific qualities of the film; and they translated the intertitles of imported films, prefiguring the work of those who dub films. They were performers, capable of dramatizing a film’s diegesis and the work of its actors. In a sense, they were the intermediary for two kinds of encounters: that between the audience in general and a revolutionary technology, and that between specific audiences and the film. This chapter will explore the theoretical questions that the film lecturer poses for cinema by examining the lecturer from three perspectives: history, politics, and semiology.

History

The discovery of the film lecturer was a productive find for the new generation of early-film historians. For those who study the lecturer, it has posed problems of various kinds, but especially that of the historiographical approach to adopt. Early historians (Georges Sadoul, Jean Mitry, Terry Ramsaye) were influenced most of all by a sense of modernity and a technological perspective, believing that technology followed a predetermined path which gave rise to foreseeable developments. For them, the lecturer was a mere substitute for a still-hesitant film language, one-destined to disappear once editing and intertitles were able to supply narrative information. This style of Hegelian and teleological history became inadequate once study of the lecturer was better documented, or approached using different methods.

The case of the Japanese *benshi* makes it possible to understand these theoretical problems quite well. In Japan, with its advanced technology and high level of film production, the lecturer played a preponderant role until long after the arrival of sound. The hypothesis of the primacy of technological development is thus inappropriate in this case. Here the historian must adopt an intermedial approach that takes into account the importance of the theatrical tradition, which in a sense imposed a living narrator on animated picture shows. This is the view of Aaron Gerow, whose Michel Foucault-inspired approach illuminates the history of the *benshi* by placing them in the context of the country's political discourse. In imperial Japan, the *benshi* were not only narrators; they were also agents for normalizing a novelty, which explains the strict organization and supervision of their work.[1]

The lecturer also poses numerous problems of an ethical nature for the-historian. The first film histories were written from a Eurocentric and colonial point of view, emphasizing technological advances and the aesthetic developments to which they gave rise and quickly casting the lecturer aside. There were, however, plentiful and diverse reception practices in other contexts. By 1920 lecturers were still at work in the Jewish community in New York and could be found in movie theaters in some African countries as late as 1980. Such facts have led to the idea of writing history from a pragmatic point of view, in which the determining factor would not be the "text" but rather how the film was used by the

audience. A postmodern perspective may also be useful, one that would replace linear technological progress with a heterogeneous vision in which animated pictures are put to use in different ways according to the cultures and traditions they encounter.

Another problem faced by the historian of film lecturing is that of the scarcity of documents. Some texts have been preserved (such as commentary on filmed passion plays, or the texts in film manufacturers' catalogues), but this is only a tiny fraction of what lecturers might have said. Here the historian of oral performance encounters the problems of writing oral history. History must be suggested by joining what we might call echoes of the lecturer: newspaper advertisements, film reviews, biographies of lecturers, criticism of lecturers. But the problem of distance and historicity remains: the history of the film lecturer is more a kind of evoking than an illusory "recreation." Nevertheless, films can be one of the traces that lead to the lecturer if the two are considered together; this was the approach taken by Martin Sopocy who, in his study of the work of James Williamson, convincingly demonstrated the merits of the hypothesis that films were made with the lecturer in mind.[2]

The film lecturer also poses problems of periodization for the film historian, problems that have given rise to hypotheses around the models to employ. Elsewhere, I have proposed that we call film lecturers' shows "oral cinema" and that this cinema be divided into three periods: "boarding," legitimacy, and resistance.[3] The first period is when animated pictures were incorporated into and "boarded" by various earlier practices involving commentary; the second stage is when narrative commentary was a factor in the film's appeal as a specific attraction; and the final stage is when the lecturer gradually disappeared, except in isolated contexts, when he adapted foreign films to local culture. Reviews of the book in which I proposed this schema discussed its principal hypotheses and proposed other approaches to the question. Tom Gunning, for example, called into question the volume's conclusions on lecturing as a resistance tactic on the part of local cultures. Without denying this role on the part of the lecturer, he believes that it must be understood as part of a broader theory of cinema as performance.[4]

Macro-historical approaches have also been extrapolated from studies of the lecturer, seeing him as a mediator in the encounter between tradition and modernity, as I proposed in the same volume mentioned above;[5] or, in the view of Alain Boillat, in his book *Du bonimenteur à la voix over*, as a mediator between traditional and technological art forms.[6] The former approach presumes that new technologies are in a sense "boarded" by older cultures and practices and become independent only at the conclusion of a long process of institutionalization. The latter hypothesis sees the lecturer as mediating the misunderstandings and anxieties which result from the sudden irruption of new modes of recorded representation that eliminate the presence of the artist. Using this explanation, Boillat posits the existence of different systems in the evolution of the voice in film, but he also traces cultural manifestations of the voice in the age when the automaton was, in a sense, the mediator of this anxiety.

Evolution and periodization also bring with them the study of continuity and ruptures. These have recently been examined in the light of the concept "cultural series," which was developed by André Gaudreault, one of the first "new historians" to take an interest in the film lecturer.[7] Gaudreault and Philippe Gauthier have recently demonstrated that the kinematograph, rather than being seen as an invention which gave rise to radical breaks, can be seen as a refinement of previous practices, in particular the magic lantern.[8] They discuss two variants of this cultural series, which were initially employed in an earlier article by Gaudreault and François Albera: "lecture with screening" and "screening with commentary."[9] Gaudreault and Gauthier, however, take care to stipulate that these two practices can take all sorts of hybrid forms: there were certainly lecturers who placed greater emphasis on the image, as there were screen practices in which the lecturer played a greater role. Nevertheless, the concept cultural series is based on premises which can be challenged in the case of the lecturer's relationship to the kinematograph: it appears to minimize the importance of the rupture brought about by a new technology. Earlier histories privileged the importance of invention in the evolution of screen practices, leaving many earlier practices taken up by the kinematograph in shadow. But a history of practices risks minimizing the major changes brought about fairly

quickly by new technologies. The evolution of lectures with screenings is a good example, because this practice was abandoned in favor of didactic or propaganda film as narrative cinema developed and took hold in public entertainments.

While research into commented animated pictures continued just about everywhere, a research group in Quebec began to work on the lecturer's legacy, establishing a project called "Pratiques orales du cinéma" (Oral Practices in Cinema). A conference with this title was held in Montreal in October 2007 whose goal was to enquire into the extent of the connection between oral culture and the film medium throughout cinema's evolution in the twentieth century. Orality, in this case, is not limited to the role of speech in a film's narrative economy, but rather the ways in which cinema adapted locally by means of exhibition practices based on oral culture: the preeminence of speech and subjectivity in the transmission and institutionalization of *énoncés* or filmic utterances; the central role of performance in modes of exhibition; and the constant adaptation of discourse to the context of its verbal utterance and the way in which this context is a factor in this enunciation.[10] The conference was an opportunity to present, document, and compare a great number of cinematic practices that have been marked by orality and to get a sense of their diversity and complexity. In the end it made it possible, within a historiographical perspective, to lay down the initial bases for thinking about the role of these practices in the development of cinematic cultures and forms which ran parallel to institutional cinema and interacted with this cinema and amongst themselves, mostly in the realm of reception but oftentimes also at every stage of the film production process. This research project gave rise to an interactive, online database documenting the various oral film practices of every period in film history.[11]

Politics

The political role of the film lecturer was based on his role as a performer, but depended also on cultural and geographical variables. Most countries imported films rather than producing them, and translating their intertitles

was of little importance compared to explaining cultural differences. A screening of *L'Inferno* (*Dante's Inferno*, Milano, 1911) for a popular audience in the United States required numerous explanations of the particularities of Italian history, just as a screening of *The Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith, 1915) would require the same in front of a Polish audience. The explanations provided by the lecturer thus made it possible for the audience to understand vicissitudes and behavior that were often unfamiliar to them. A learned lecturer could amaze with his knowledge, a skilful lecturer could dramatize the film's narrative effects, a comic lecturer could make sarcastic comments about national differences, and a political lecturer could emphasize the watchwords of the day. But the essence of the lecturer's function can be explained by the important place of speech in a complex process of mediation. On the one hand the lecturer's commentary prepared the audience for an encounter with a relatively revolutionary technology which, like its content, ran up against viewers' habits; and on the other this commentary often mediated between works produced in a few countries and foreign audiences with a much different culture. Perhaps the concept best equipped to understand this situation is Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of *taktichnost* or tact in literature and applied to film studies by Robert Stam.[12] This concept refers to every non-verbal but important aspect of communication: tone, attitude, gestures, codes, and physical mannerisms, which can be just as important as the text being uttered. This concept enables us to better understand the complexity of the communication involved in showing a film, as well as the complexity of the codes involved in interpreting a work whose technology and form are as alien as the discourse they convey. The history and theory of lecturing in film is difficult to write because documentation is rare, but the concept "tact" makes it possible to better grasp the objectives framing this research. The study of dubbing could corroborate this hypothesis. Because of its strong similarity to lecturing, in one of the rare theoretical studies of the topic the linguist Istvan Fodor has shown that verbal translation also involves a corporeal dimension closely tied to culture.[13]

Study of the film lecturer also brings out the political assumptions of technological history. Lecturers were forgotten or overlooked because film history was written in the countries where cinema was invented, rapidly

becoming one of the “disembodied” technologies described by Boillat.[14] Historians are interested first of all in inventors, and then in films and their authors, and have thus neglected films’ existence in the other countries and contexts in which they were seen. The *benshi* attracted attention mostly because Japan was a major film producing country, and this figure played an important role in its industry. In the colonies and semi-colonies, however, which produced very few films and were large importers, nothing, or almost, was written about the various performers who accompanied the foreign film to adapt it to national or local culture. The *turjuman*, *pyongsa*, and *filmuitlegger* who commented on or continue to comment on films, introducing, translating, and discussing them in countries where the colonial economy has been replaced by the post-colonial economy, have been forgotten. Little has changed under the post-colonial economy, according to the group of specialists on the countries concerned who contributed to a volume edited by Anthony R. Guneratne and Wimal Dissanayake entitled *Rethinking Third Cinema*.[15] Their work has instigated a history we might call not just decolonized, but often deterritorialized or uprooted: this history no longer sees cinema as a national text but, as Hamid Naficy argues, as a hybrid practice blending countries, classes, and genres.[16]

The film lecturer can also be studied from the point of view of class struggle and the relationship between rulers and ruled. Cinema appeared at a chaotic time, when revolutionary transformations were affecting both politics and technology. Filmmaking practices developed anarchically and various observers quickly became concerned about the excesses the medium might provoke. In many situations, the film lecturer could thus play a mediating and controlling role, as Noël Burch describes.[17] The question of his ability to play this role was soon posed, however, with this ability often being linked to his social class and education. In Europe and North America cultivated lecturers deemed fit to educate the public while at the same time entertaining it were promoted by newspapers and the trade press. The articles they published also show signs of considerable condescension toward common lecturers who wished to have fun with familiar audiences without worrying too much about the social order or with wrapping themselves in culture. These same articles suggested that the

reason these lecturers kept their jobs was because they had a large audience, making them valuable to the exhibitor. They were soon swept out of movie theaters, but their history in Japan confirms their importance to a certain class's political control: while tradition rendered them somewhat indispensable, authorities demanded that they be qualified to represent the dominant culture.

In addition to class relations, lecturers were also tied to international relations. Their longer presence in the colonies and amongst minorities testifies to their role as mediators between a hegemonic culture and a subjugated culture. They translated, interpreted, and explained films from the metropolis. Today there is no longer any attempt to explain their role as that of a propagator of colonial culture and its films; rather, scholars examine post-colonial models in which the mediator conjoins colonial culture and local culture in a hybrid culture in which the film is part of a performance. Well-documented examples now attest to this fact, from the *bonimenteur* in the popular culture around animated pictures in Quebec to the Korean *pyongsa* who served as a mediator during the country's occupation by the Japanese.

The lecturer could also be the agent of official political propaganda. The clearest example of this is that of the "red lecturers" studied by Valérie Pozner: the Russian agitators whose job it was to spread Bolshevik ideas through lectures with screenings.[18] A very different yet comparable example can be found in Quebec, where filmmaker-priests lectured with their own films to propagate the ideal of an agrarian Catholic economy. These practices have long been studied in a classical Marxist vein and described from a textual perspective, in which they are seen as the vectors of dominant ideologies. More recent approaches focus on deconstructing the various discourses that converge in such screenings: the film and the commentary have a job to perform, but they often run up against contrary views which could transform, or at least attenuate, their message. This dialectical but less binary approach is now based, moreover, on conclusive evidence: the propagandists' reports, which describe their work and their often limited success.[19]

The lecturer also illuminates political questions around language. While the arrival of intertitles threw many lecturers out of work in film-producing

countries, in other countries it often prolonged their careers or provided them with new careers as translators. The hegemony of “silent” films and of the countries which produced them was thus attenuated by the intervention of national or local agents who not only adapted the film to their audience’s language and culture, but who could intervene on another level through their own performance. In Taiwan during the Japanese occupation, for example, the country was inundated with Japanese films which were obligatorily titled in Japanese. Translating these into the local language rendered the presence of the *benshi* practically essential, but they were quickly subjected to the same forms of strict control as in Japan and, as Jeanne Deslandes describes, the police monitored their performances closely.[20]

The political aspects of the history of the lecturer are better understood through an approach based on the history of cultural practices, but perhaps also through the school of micro-history. Cultural studies is not interested in the text, but rather in its contextual interpretation, the way micro-history tries to understand isolated events as part of an overall history. This interest in context and the way it is taken into account in historical studies of reception shows that the lecturer is one of the most revealing and heuristically productive elements of the new film history.

Semiology

The lecturer also poses questions of a semiological nature, on the one hand relative to his role in silent cinema’s “apparatus” and on the other because of his connection to later forms of organization which can illuminate his function against the grain. The lecturer’s work can be explained as having a narrative function, as classical film history has most often done. This history, based overwhelmingly on the development of editing as a narrative stratagem, constructed an evolutionary model in which the lecturer is simply a source of narrative information that editing and camera movement were not yet able to supply. This is a teleological approach in that it explains the presence of the lecturer by means of later developments rather than trying to understand the context of his presence. A synchronic

approach is able to examine the lecturer's narrative role, seeing his narration as the principal text and the film as secondary. This, however, is still a teleological explanation, because it places narration in the driver's seat, as classical cinema would do. If we shift our understanding of the central element and see the lecture as a performance, the lecturer resumes his place in the attraction/narration dialectic: in this view, animated pictures were attractions which the lecture can make narrative, but the lecture can also be an attraction added to round out the film, just as the film can be an attraction added to the narration of a lecturer.

This more complex and polycentric model is corroborated by the recent work of Alain Boillat.[21] The focus of his book is the dialectic between human and machine in cinema, studied through the question of the voice. Balancing and refining previous work on animated pictures, he shows that film commentary, in practice, is the work not only of human mediation but also of mechanical mediation with which viewers are clearly familiar. He then examines the effects of this joint mediation in the silent period, but also its historical and theoretical extensions during the interregnum between silent and sound film and after the transition to sound. Boillat examines the relationship between orality and film, but pushes this examination farther than the lecturer by taking up the status of recorded speech in talking cinema. Contrasting *spoken* film and *speaking* film, he advocates a-refinement in the way we look at film commentary through the use of a typology (the synchronization of the spoken word and physical gestures; vocal kinetics in or on the image; etc.) and contests some of my own work, in particular regarding film lecturing as a "resistance practice." According to Boillat, films presented by a lecturer cover a highly diverse range of practices and can give rise to narrative immersion as much as to narrative distancing. His book's most important contribution, however, consists in theorizing the existence of four vocal systems deriving from the film lecturer: voice-attraction, found in both spoken and speaking films in silent and sound cinema; voice-explanation; voice-narration; and voice-action.[22] He devotes a chapter to the films of Sacha Guitry, providing a subtle discussion of the many complex ways in which the voice is used and its-relationship with the script and the image, in particular in Guitry's film *Le Roman d'un tricheur* (*Confessions of a Cheat*, 1936).

The film lecturer can also be theorized as the mediator of the cinema of-attractions. Today, André Gaudreault speaks instead of "kine-attractography," a translation of an expression he has borrowed from the historian G.-Michel Coissac, in keeping with his desire to describe the film experience of the day with period vocabulary. In essence, Gaudreault's project consists in associating attraction with discontinuity. He believes that "animated pictures" are a cultural series founded on attraction, one that appears with the earliest optical toys and comes to a conclusion with the earliest films, meaning that it existed from approximately 1830 to 1900.[23] This perfectly defined and historicized theoretical position nevertheless appears to be missing an element: film commentary (and perhaps the film-subject's internal discourse). Optical toys could naturally be used by a single person, but their simulated movement was understood, even as the viewer was excited and surprised by it, because this movement was seen as a continuation of previous experiences. The figures on optical toys, like those in early films, were associated with movement because their viewers saw movement where there was none, according to the now well-known theory known as beta movement (which has supplanted the theory of the persistence of vision to explain our perception of moving pictures).[24]

Optical toys were different from the magic lantern by virtue of the fact that their attractions were "looped" and free of narration, but lantern shows already contained attractions in the form of trick effects which gave the illusion of movement (such as moving pieces in their metal and glass plates). The attraction of optical toys thus rested not only on the surprise of seeing movement, but also on that of realizing that inanimate and separate drawings could create the illusion of movement. This surprise, however, was perhaps not as great as one might think (or not as great as Gaudreault and Nicolas Dulac think)[25] because it was already anticipated by viewers familiar with the magic lantern. The lecturer had been a part of the lantern show experience since its appearance a few hundred years before. Such shows were often instructive or narrative, but were also often made up of attractions. Robertson's shows are the best-known and most eloquent-example of this.[26] Robertson used verbal narration to introduce the show, but also to prepare the attractions. The show placed viewers in a state of

alert and often tried to amplify their reactions, like any good storyteller or scriptwriter.

Here the question is posed of the sites of the utterances in a recorded, as opposed to performed, work. Contemporary theory supposes that films employ reflexive and not deictic forms of utterances; in other words, that the signs of a film's utterance derive from the film itself. This was the belief of Christian Metz, who devoted considerable time to this question. He concluded that films are devoid of deictics, that their utterances are more reflexive than deictic, and that this reflexivity derives from the fact that the film is both the site and the destination of the utterance.[27] This theory, while it seems well founded with respect to classical narrative cinema, is not such a good fit with other bodies of work and reception contexts which modify the enunciatory parameters of the work, or films which stand out because their enunciatory and narrative strategies are oral as opposed to literary. There is certainly a degree of ambiguity with respect to the site of enunciation in the case of films with a lecturer, because a savvy lecturer could easily take command of the story and its development. While this naturally doesn't invalidate Metz's structural semiology, it highlights the fact that it is more interested in the image track than in the sound track, and that a less iconocentric history of cinema might inspire a more acousmatic semiology. Metz's hypotheses around the film as source of the utterance need to be reevaluated and replaced by a source seen as a deictic utterance deriving from a "constructed author," or an author whose intervention is imagined by the viewer. This is what François Jost proposes, rejecting the idea of a film theory which sees a film's utterances as abstract.[28] This concept of a constructed author holds up better than the theory of Francesco Casetti, who sees the film's deictics in its credit sequence or in signs of its technical aspects.[29] While Casetti's approach appears to diverge from Metz's theories, it still places too much emphasis on the film itself as the agent of the utterance. The concept of the constructed author enables us more clearly to see the film as a production and to locate its utterance rather than its utterer.

Conclusion

In its present state, theory around the film lecturer seems to be divided along two lines: the immanent and determinist line of classical film history, which sees commentary as a narrative helper which was quickly rejected once film began to acquire narrative and discursive capabilities; and the pragmatic and contextual line, which believes, rather, that film commentary was an important force in the heterogeneous forms of film reception found in various countries and cultures. The second line has been scholars' guiding principle for the past twenty-five years, and has produced a number of works seen as important within the discipline. This form of research appears to be assured of a long and productive life, if we take a broad view of the field: the history and geography of the initial phenomenon are still incompletely sketched out, as are later manifestations of oral cinema practices and their context. We should not conclude, however, that earlier approaches have run dry, because in the end the work of the new historians consists in thinking critically about the work of their predecessors.

Notes

1 Aaron Gerow, "The Benshi's New Face: Defining Cinema in Taishô Japan," *Iconics* 3 (1994): 69–86.

2 Martin Sopocy, *James Williamson: Studies and Documents of a Pioneer of the Film Narrative* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1998).

3 Germain Lacasse, *Le bonimenteur de vues animées: Le cinéma muet entre tradition et modernité* (Quebec City: Note Bene; Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 2000), 67–8.

4 Tom Gunning, "The Scene of Speaking: Two Decades of Discovering the Film Lecturer," *Iris* 27 (1999): 67–79.

5 Lacasse, *Bonimenteur*, 183–5.

6 Alain Boillat, *Du bonimenteur à la voix over: Voix-attraction et voix-narration au cinéma* (Lausanne: Antipodes, 2007), 177.

7 See André Gaudreault, *From Plato to Lumière: Narration and Monstration in Literature and Cinema*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Toronto:

University of Toronto Press, 2009); and *Film and Attraction: From Kinematography to Cinema*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

8 André Gaudreault and Philippe Gauthier, “La série culturelle des *conférences avec projections*: continuités et ruptures” (conference, Domitor, Toronto, June 2010). Forthcoming in Rob King, Charlie Keil, and Scott Curtis, eds., *Beyond the Screen: Institutions, Networks and Publics of Early Cinema* (New Barnet: John Libbey).

9 François Albera and André Gaudreault, “Apparition, disparition et escamotage du ‘bonimenteur’ dans l’historiographie française du cinéma,” in *Le muet a la parole. Cinéma et performance à l’aube du XXe siècle*, eds. Giusy Pisano and Valérie Pozner (Paris: AFRHC, 2005), 167–99.

10 Germain Lacasse, Vincent Bouchard, and Gwenn Scheppler, *Pratiques orales du cinéma* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2010). Vincent Bouchard offers especially salient examples in tracing the history of griots responsible for the translation of films during the colonial period, and in emphasizing the persistence of this practice in contemporary projections in Dakar (ibid., 149–58).

11 See www.poc.uquam.ca.

12 Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 45–8.

13 Istvan Fodor, *Film Dubbing: Phonetic, Semiotic, Esthetic and Psychological Aspects* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 1976), 14–15.

14 Boillat, *Bonimenteur*, 17–18.

15 Anthony Guneratne and Wimal Dissanayake, eds., *Rethinking Third Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

16 Hamid Naficy, “Theorizing ‘Third World’ Film Spectatorship,” in Guneratne and Dissanayake, *Rethinking Third Cinema, 183–201*.

17 Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, ed. and trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); *La lucarne de l’infini. Naissance du langage cinématographique* (Paris, Nathan, 1991), 229.

18 Valérie Pozner, “Le bonimenteur rouge. Retour sur la question de l’oralité à propos du cas soviétique,” *Cinémas* 14, nos. 2–3 (2004): 143–78.

19 Ibid.

20 Jeanne Deslandes, “Dancing Shadows of Film Exhibition: Taiwan and the Japanese Influence,” *Screening the Past* 11 (November 2000), http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/current/cc1100.html.

21 Boillat, *Bonimenteur*.

22 Ibid., especially chap. 4, “Les fondements théoriques de la voix-attraction.”

23 Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction*, 63–5 and 175–7.

24 Joseph Anderson and Barbara Fisher, “The Myth of Persistence of Vision Revisited,” *Journal of Film and Video* 45, no. 1 (1993): 3–12.

25 Nicolas Dulac and André Gaudreault, “Circularity and Repetition at the Heart of the Attraction: Optical Toys and the Emergence of a New Cultural Series,” in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 227–44.

26 See Françoise Levie, *Étienne-Gaspard Robertson, la vie d’un fantasmagore* (Longueuil: Les Éditions du Préambule; Brussels: Sofidoc, 1990).

27 Christian Metz, “L’énonciation personnelle ou le site du film,” *Vertigo* 1 (1988): 29.

28 François Jost, *Un monde à notre image: Énonciation, Cinéma, Télévision* (Quebec City: Nota Bene; Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1992), 73–89.

29 Francesco Casetti, *Inside the Gaze: The Film and its Spectator* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1990), 44.

26

Richard Hoffman

A Collector's Archive

Richard Koszarski

On March 12, 1913, readers of the *New-York Tribune* were confronted by an extremely detailed page one account of nickelodeon-inspired mayhem.[1] While not especially rare, what made this particular outrage so newsworthy was that the youths involved committed their crimes (and saw their films) not in the overcrowded east side tenement district but on Staten Island, a largely rural borough of New York connected to the rest of the city by a network of ferry lines:

"BURGLARS, SURE," SAY BOYS OF EIGHT

Two Staten Island Youngsters Amaze Police and Parents with Confessions of Robberies

Moving Pictures Blamed

Got Knowledge of the Craft from Films, They Maintain, and Showed Ingratitude by Stealing $20 from Box Office

It seems that two eight-year-old boys, Daniel O'Connor and Harold Bland, had been apprehended while strolling down Bay Street in the Staten Island community of Stapleton. Pockets stuffed with cash, each had been struggling under the weight of a small-bore rifle looted from a nearby shop on Beach Street, immediately raising the suspicions of local police. The culprits admitted to a string of break-ins that had troubled the neighborhood for weeks. "Sure, we are burglars, and have robbed lots of people," said one. "We had been to moving picture shows and seen how it was done." In

a show of extraordinary ingratitude, they had even robbed the cashbox at the local nickelodeon.

O'Connor and Bland lived on Clinton Street, within walking distance of the crime scenes. The Odeon, the theater which inspired their spree (and also suffered the consequences), was about ten blocks away, at the foot of Victory Boulevard. As with most neighborhood picture houses, the Odeon did not advertise in the local newspapers (and certainly not in the *New-York Herald*), so it would normally be quite difficult for us to say anything about its programs, prices, or product line. But a few blocks east of Clinton, at 245 Tompkins Avenue, lived another Odeon regular, also heavily influenced by the films he saw there. Richard L. Hoffman was not moved to rob the nickelodeon's cash box, or march down Bay Street armed with stolen weaponry. The only thing that most film fans took from the Odeon, of course, was the ineffable experience of sitting in its audience. Hoffman took something more. Unlike the others, he sought to memorialize that experience by collecting, organizing, and preserving every physical trace of his career as a *cinéaste*.

Between October 1913 and January 1917, Hoffman not only went to a lot of movies, but marked his trail by carefully assembling an archive of programs, photographs, periodicals, correspondence, and even movie posters. The Hoffman Collection, acquired by the Museum of the Moving Image in 1984, is not the largest accumulation of movie memorabilia from this period. But unlike others with which I am familiar, this time capsule appears to have survived largely intact: nothing was added to it after 1917 and very little seems to have been removed.[2] Later collectors (such as Theodore Huff) collected in many of these same categories, but their acquisitions were encyclopedic, an attempt to document the entire spectrum of a medium they already recognized as historic. Their collections were also refined over many years, sifted and reorganized so that by the end they reflected the judgments of a curator more than the obsessions of a fan. Hoffman treated his collection as *memorabilia* in the classic sense – the items are souvenirs, intended to recall his own history and his own experiences. The collection lacks the size and scope of Huff's, whose 30,000 film stills, collected over many years, were later acquired by the George Eastman House, but what we have instead is something rarer and

more intimate: an archeological record of one fan's journey from nickelodeons to airdomes to picture palaces during one of the most tumultuous periods in the development of the cinema.

It is important to note that Hoffman's passion for film was not merely that of a fan, but a collector. In her book *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture*, Kathryn H. Fuller notes the gender-inflected history of this phenomenon, which she sees as highly feminized ever since the 1920s. Citing the work of Susan Douglas (who describes a technologically driven movement of male radio amateurs during almost this same period) she describes the first male movie fans as devotees of the new medium's technology, even building their own cameras and projectors. When radio, and motion pictures, became too technologically complex to support this level of amateur activity, even the most interested males found their obsessions turning elsewhere. Fuller sees the "marginalization" of male fans occurring quite suddenly, between 1915 and 1917 – the same period, coincidentally, documented in Hoffman's collection.[3]

Without denying the relevance of any gender issues here, I would suggest that Hoffman's interest in motion pictures is more closely related to the way in which males responded to popular theater in the nineteenth century than the way they would later embrace ham radio, video games, or the internet. In fact, there is almost no evidence on Hoffman's part of a special concern with cameras or projectors. His collecting had nothing to do with *participating* in the new medium, but instead allowed him to capture some record of the magic he discovered while sitting in those motion picture theaters. Hoffman's spiritual descendants today are less likely to be found in film schools than at movie "paper shows" and memorabilia auctions – activities that, if my experience is any guide, tend to be completely dominated by males.

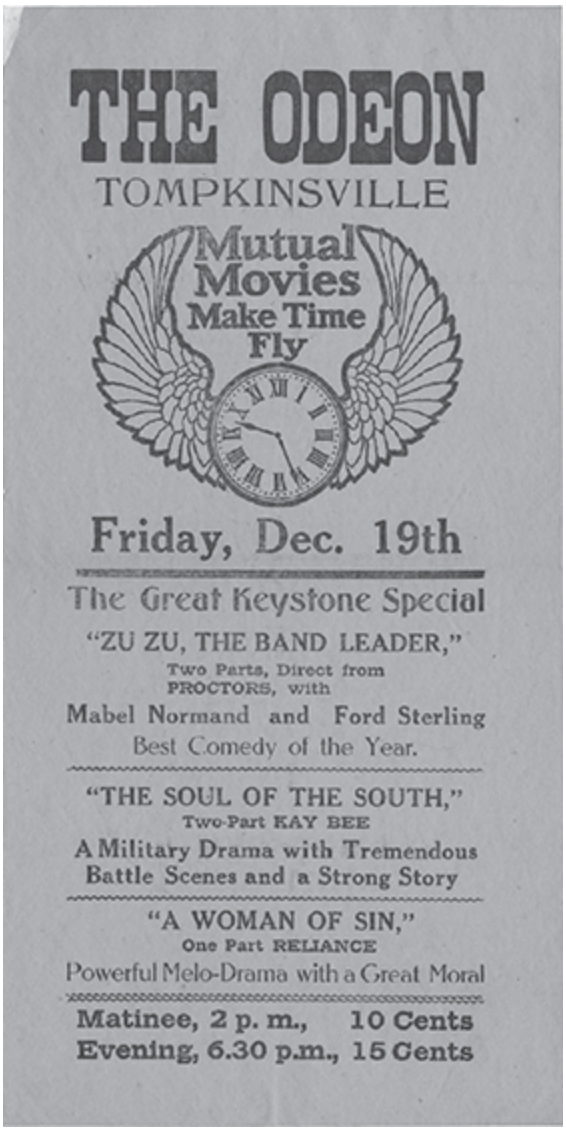
Things may have been different when O'Connor and Bland frequented the Odeon, but by the end of the year, according to Hoffman's collection, the theater was a proud Mutual licensee. Programs seem to have changed daily, the Odeon presenting five reels of Mutual shorts (December 19, 1913) or a five-reel Mutual feature (*The Battle of Gettysburg*, November 29, 1913) as distribution schedules allowed. There was no difference in

ticket price (10 cents for matinees, 15 cents for evening shows), and the same two-a-day screening schedule of 2:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. (remarkably early for an evening show; perhaps the locals were early risers). A flier prepared for the short film program features a large reproduction of the Mutual logo (Figure 26.1). The three films are identified by brand – Keystone, Kay Bee, and Reliance. Keystone stars Mabel Normand and Ford Sterling are the only personnel listed, and their film, *Zu Zu, the Band Leader*, is touted as "Direct from PROCTOR'S," a claim of relative freshness as well as quality. There was no vaudeville and no illustrated songs. The use of such inexpensively printed handbills was generally considered the most efficient way for neighborhood theaters to advertise a one-day showing of assorted short subjects.[4]

For *The Battle of Gettysburg*, a feature length picture, the Orpheum made use of Mutual's pre-printed herald, a stock promotional item made available to exhibitors along with posters and advertising cuts. Heralds were two-sided monochrome sheets, usually around 7 × 8 inches, which could be folded once (sometimes twice) to resemble a theatrical program. During this period they generally included a detailed plot summary and as much illustrative material as possible. One section was always left blank for theater managers to print or stamp the name of their own house, and the date and time of the performance. The herald for *The Battle of Gettysburg*, a relatively early feature, does not list any actors or technical personnel, only the name of producer Thomas H. Ince.

What we learn from these two documents is that (other than advertising the names of the popular Keystone stars) the Odeon was making little or no distinction between a program of Mutual short subjects and one containing only a single Mutual feature. Prices and show times remained the same. The lack of a continuous grind suggests that the audience was not cruising in and out of the local picture shows at random, but was accustomed to a limited number of performances beginning at stated times.

Figure 26.1 Handbill advertising the December 19, 1913 program at the Odeon, Tompkinsville, Staten Island, NY. All illustrations courtesy of the Museum of the Moving Image, New York.


THE ODEON
TOMPKINSVILLE
Mutual Movies Make Time Fly
Friday, Dec. 19th
The Great Keystone Special
"ZU ZU, THE BAND LEADER,"
Two Parts, Direct from PROCTORS, with
Mabel Normand and Ford Sterling
Best Comedy of the Year.
"THE SOUL OF THE SOUTH,"
Two-Part KAY BEE
A Military Drama with Tremendous Battle Scenes and a Strong Story
"A WOMAN OF SIN,"
One Part RELIANCE
Powerful Melo-Drama with a Great Moral
Matinee, 2 p. m., 10 Cents
Evening, 6.30 p.m., 15 Cents

In addition to these fliers, Hoffman appears to have collected something else at the Odeon. From October 1913 through June 1914, he acquired seventeen issues of *Reel Life*, the house paper of the Mutual Film Corp. *Reel Life* had a cover price of 5 cents and appeared once each week, publishing plot synopses and cast lists, profusely illustrated, and a regular "Real Tales About Reel Folk" gossip column. Of course, this coverage was limited to Mutual products, and entire pages were devoted to the upcoming release schedules of Mutual's component production companies. Most of its advertising was specifically directed at theater owners and operators, and included ads for projectors, ticket rolls, electrical generating plants, and film cement – subjects of little appeal to the average film fan. By combining the functions of a fan magazine and a trade paper, *Reel Life*

intended to appeal to both exhibitors and their audiences: but where did Hoffman acquire his run of this paper? He might have been a subscriber, but it is more likely that he picked up his copy every week at the Odeon. After the summer of 1914, when Hoffman moved away from Staten Island and the Tompkinsville Odeon, we find no more copies of *Reel Life* in his collection, although he continued to collect the other journals he had begun acquiring during this period, including *Photoplay* and *Motion Picture News*.

While it might seem odd for someone not working in the industry to be reading trade papers like *Motion Picture News* (and, by 1916, *Moving Picture World*), the fact that "even the kids buy it [*MPW*] to read the film synopses" was recognized as early as 1911. According to one source – quoted, admittedly, in *Moving Picture World* itself – fans were studying the synopses published in the trades to make themselves "familiar with the characters and scenes" of the films they were seeing, because this was the only place such information was then available.[5] Was Hoffman one of these "kids?" Donor records contain no clue as to his date of birth and only rumors regarding his death. While street addresses can be identified from postcards and letters, there are no references to family, friends, schools, or employment. Even census records have proven unhelpful. Not until 2011 did research by Lucille Bertram establish the date and place of his birth: June 20, 1901, in the borough of Manhattan. Perhaps one day additional information may help explain more about him and how – and why – he gathered these items. But until that happens, the Richard Hoffman Collection *is* Richard Hoffman.

Of course, Hoffman also attended other theaters on Staten Island. In January 1914 he saw a British import, *The Battle of Waterloo*, at the Star Theatre on Richmond Terrace in the New Brighton district, about five miles by street car from his home on Tompkins Avenue. The film was distributed on a States Rights basis, and the promotional herald circulated for the two-day run was, unlike the typical herald of this period, merely an illustrated handbill printed on inexpensive newsprint stock. The theater added its own information at the top. Three months later Hoffman returned to the Star to see Lubin's six-reel production of *The Lion and the Mouse*, but in this case the Star used the conventional herald produced for Lubin by the General Film Co.

Further west along Richmond Terrace was a more developed section known as Port Richmond, just across from Bayonne, New Jersey. Many of Staten Island's more upscale movie theaters would eventually be built here. But during the period that Hoffman lived on Staten Island, resistance to the picture show evil was especially strong in the Port Richmond area, as can be seen from a 1915 entry in the diary of Ida Dudley Dale, a community leader and social activist. "We were more than shocked & disgusted to read how fine girls were selected, like animals, as ushers for a new picture show in Port Richmond," she wrote. "They are to be there, admittedly, as a drawing card for vile men." Events like this suggested to her just how and why the once tranquil borough of Staten Island was going to the dogs, and Dale blamed its current moral decline on "the Picture Shows & their Jew managers."[6] The obsessions of someone like Hoffman – not to mention the depredations of O'Connor and Bland – could only have been seen as further evidence of this continuing social decline.

The last evidence of Hoffman's filmgoing on Staten Island is another General Film Co. herald, this one for a screening of Vitagraph's *A Million Bid* at the Royal Garden Open Air on Bay Street in Stapleton, within walking distance of his home. What is interesting about this item is the fact that the printed date, Tuesday, 26 May [1914], has been blocked out, and an *earlier* date, Friday, 22 May, printed below. Shipping delays resulting in last minute substitutions may not have been unusual for such performances, but in this case a change in program was made early enough to move up the show date and reprint the promotional literature. The Royal Garden was located along the shore, a pleasant location for an open air theater or "airdome." Seldom offering the newest or finest pictures, these open air theaters at least allowed movie fans to feed their habit during the worst months of summer, when many hardtop venues would simply close up for the season.

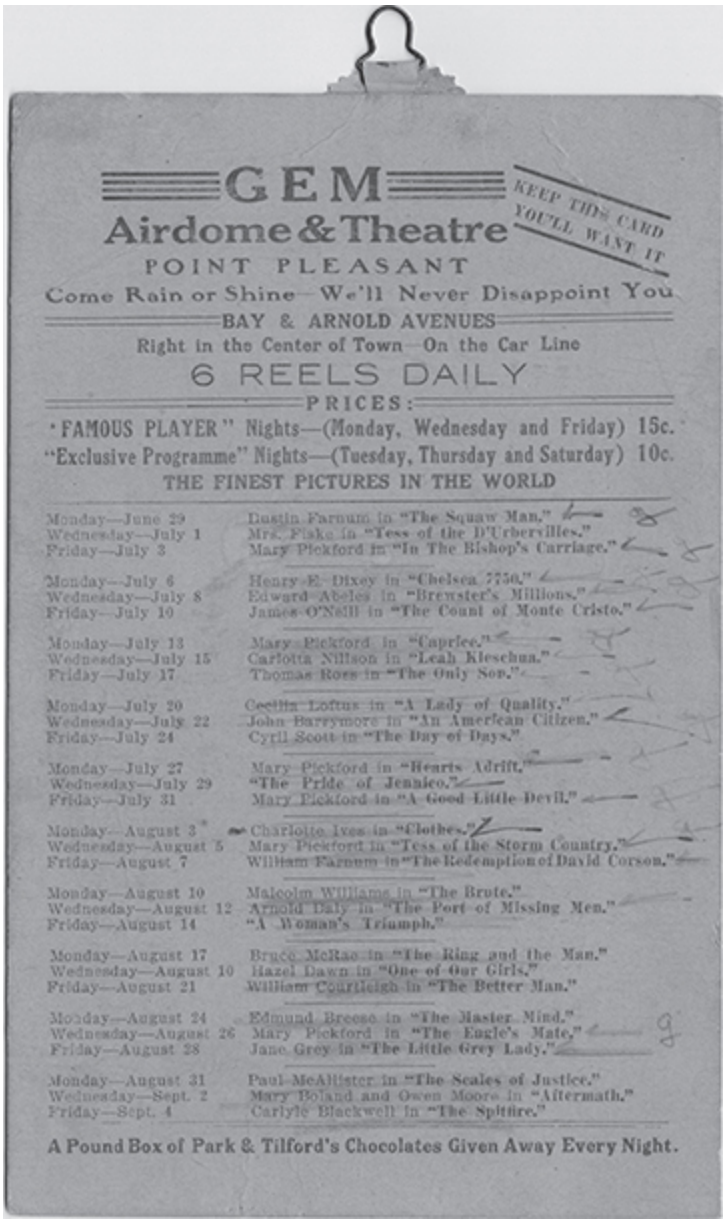
Hoffman seems to have left Staten Island by the summer of 1914. Oddly enough, although his collection contains runs of *Reel Life*, *Photoplay*, and *Motion Picture News* for most of the period he lived there, there are only five traceable program announcements. Perhaps he neglected to keep any others, or lost track of them when he moved. But their relative scarcity (at a time when he was aggressively acquiring both fan magazines and trade

papers) may also indicate that the small theaters scattered around Stapleton, Tompkinsville, and New Brighton simply did not make much use of heralds or programs, and depended instead on street-front ballyhoo to attract audiences. The situation would be very different after he relocated to Germantown, a suburb of Philadelphia, in the fall.

Pictures and Posters: The Airdome at Point Pleasant

But first, like many other city-dwellers, Hoffman spent the summer of 1914 at the New Jersey shore. Here he attended the Gem Airdome and Theatre, located at the intersection of Bay and Arnold Avenues in Point Pleasant, "Right in the Center of Town – On the Car Line." We know this from a "hanger" distributed by the Gem to summer residents, an 8 × 5 inches placard fitted with a small hook ("Keep this card you'll want it") (Figure 26.2). This hanger, which conveniently lists the entire season's program, would be immediately recognizable to any modern *cinéaste* (mine tends to get stuck up on the refrigerator, with magnets). As with a drive-in theater, screenings would begin whenever it was dark enough, so no show times are listed; if the weather was bad the show could be moved indoors to the associated hard-top "theatre." Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays were "Exclusive Programme Nights," evidently a grab bag selection (no titles indicated), with a 10 cent admission. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, however, were "Famous Player Nights," with admission prices 50 percent higher. Hoffman would come to prize the Famous Players program, and especially the films of his favorite star, Mary Pickford.

Figure 26.2 Summer calendar "hanger" for the Gem Airdome & Theatre, Point Pleasant, NJ (1914). Courtesy of the Museum of the Moving Image, New York.



GEM
Airdome & Theatre
KEEP THIS CARD YOU'LL WANT IT
POINT PLEASANT
Come Rain or Shine—We'll Never Disappoint You
BAY & ARNOLD AVENUES
Right in the Center of Town—On the Car Line
6 REELS DAILY
PRICES:
"FAMOUS PLAYER" Nights—(Monday, Wednesday and Friday) 15c.
"Exclusive Programme" Nights—(Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday) 10c.
THE FINEST PICTURES IN THE WORLD

Monday—June 29 — Dustin Farnum in "The Squaw Man."
Wednesday—July 1 — Mrs. Fiske in "Tess of the D'Urbervilles."
Friday—July 3 — Mary Pickford in "In The Bishop's Carriage."

Monday—July 6 — Henry E. Dixey in "Chelsea 7750."
Wednesday—July 8 — Edward Abeles in "Brewster's Millions."
Friday—July 10 — James O'Neill in "The Count of Monte Cristo."

Monday—July 13 — Mary Pickford in "Caprice."
Wednesday—July 15 — Carlotta Nillson in "Leah Kleschna."
Friday—July 17 — Thomas Ross in "The Only Son."

Monday—July 20 — Cecilia Loftus in "A Lady of Quality."
Wednesday—July 22 — John Barrymore in "An American Citizen."
Friday—July 24 — Cyril Scott in "The Day of Days."

Monday—July 27 — Mary Pickford in "Hearts Adrift."
Wednesday—July 29 — "The Pride of Jennico."
Friday—July 31 — Mary Pickford in "A Good Little Devil."

Monday—August 3 — Charlotte Ives in "Clothes."
Wednesday—August 5 — Mary Pickford in "Tess of the Storm Country."
Friday—August 7 — William Farnum in "The Redemption of David Corson."

Monday—August 10 — Malcolm Williams in "The Brute."
Wednesday—August 12 — Arnold Daly in "The Port of Missing Men."
Friday—August 14 — "A Woman's Triumph."

Monday—August 17 — Bruce McRae in "The Ring and the Man."
Wednesday—August 19 — Hazel Dawn in "One of Our Girls."
Friday—August 21 — William Courtleigh in "The Better Man."

Monday—August 24 — Edmund Breese in "The Master Mind."
Wednesday—August 26 — Mary Pickford in "The Eagle's Mate."
Friday—August 28 — Jane Grey in "The Little Grey Lady."

Monday—August 31 — Paul McAllister in "The Scales of Justice."
Wednesday—Sept. 2 — Mary Boland and Owen Moore in "Aftermath."
Friday—Sept. 4 — Carlyle Blackwell in "The Spitfire."

A Pound Box of Park & Tilford's Chocolates Given Away Every Night.

On each of the nights listed, from June 29 through September 4, the Gem would screen a different Famous Players feature, thirty in all that summer. According to his marginal notes, Hoffman was there nearly every night, indicating his favorites, it would seem, with a simply noted "g."[7] The Gem gave away a pound box of chocolates every night, but Hoffman seems to have come home with something better. Demonstrating the instincts of a true collector, he appears to have taken the theater's posters and stills right off the wall. There are thirteen lithographed one-sheets (27 × 41 inches) in Hoffman's collection, and three of them – Mary Pickford's *Hearts Adrift*

(screened July 27) and *A Good Little Devil* (July 31), and *Clothes*, starring Charlotte Ives (August 3) – represent films he saw that summer at the Gem.[8]

There are also thirty-three motion picture scene stills in the Hoffman collection, eleven of them for films known to have been included on the Gem's programs.[9] These 8 × 10 inches photo gelatines, printed on a heavier card stock than ordinary photographs, are what the British usefully call "front of house stills." Depictions of scenes from the film taken by a still photographer, they were not primarily intended for distribution to newspapers or magazines, but were instead posted in front of the theater to promote a specific show (and so would only have been available at the theater or film exchange). They are overprinted with the title of the film and usually the name of the producer and distributor. Sometimes a caption to the scene was provided, and the names of important stars were generally indicated. Modern collectors might refer to these as "midget lobby cards," but they lack the colorful graphics usually employed in lobby cards. Pin holes often seen in the corners also differentiate them from ordinary publicity stills.

Although both Europe and the United States had been swept by "postermania" in the 1880s and 1890s, the fad had eventually run out of steam and "by 1910 or so the poster as a collectible had all but vanished."[10] Surprisingly, contempt for all varieties of theatrical poster was especially strong around the time Hoffman began collecting, particularly from supporters of the poster art. Charles Matlack Price, in an influential 1913 study, saw theatrical posters as competing "chiefly in stupidity," especially in their fascination with star portraiture.[11] The subgenre of film posters attracted even less interest. So Hoffman would not have had a lot of competition for these one-sheets, which were scorned by poster collectors and ignored by movie fans in favor of souvenirs which were easier to obtain and less difficult to display.

While collecting posters and scene stills was highly unusual in this period, there already was an established market in photographic portraits of film actors. By 1910 *Moving Picture World* noted that theater managers were calling for photographs of the players as promotional aids, but that

previously, “requests of this character have come from love-smitten patrons of the places.”[12] Hoffman acquired many such portraits, either by writing directly to the stars and studios, or by ordering from the catalogue of the Wyanoak Publishing Company in New York.

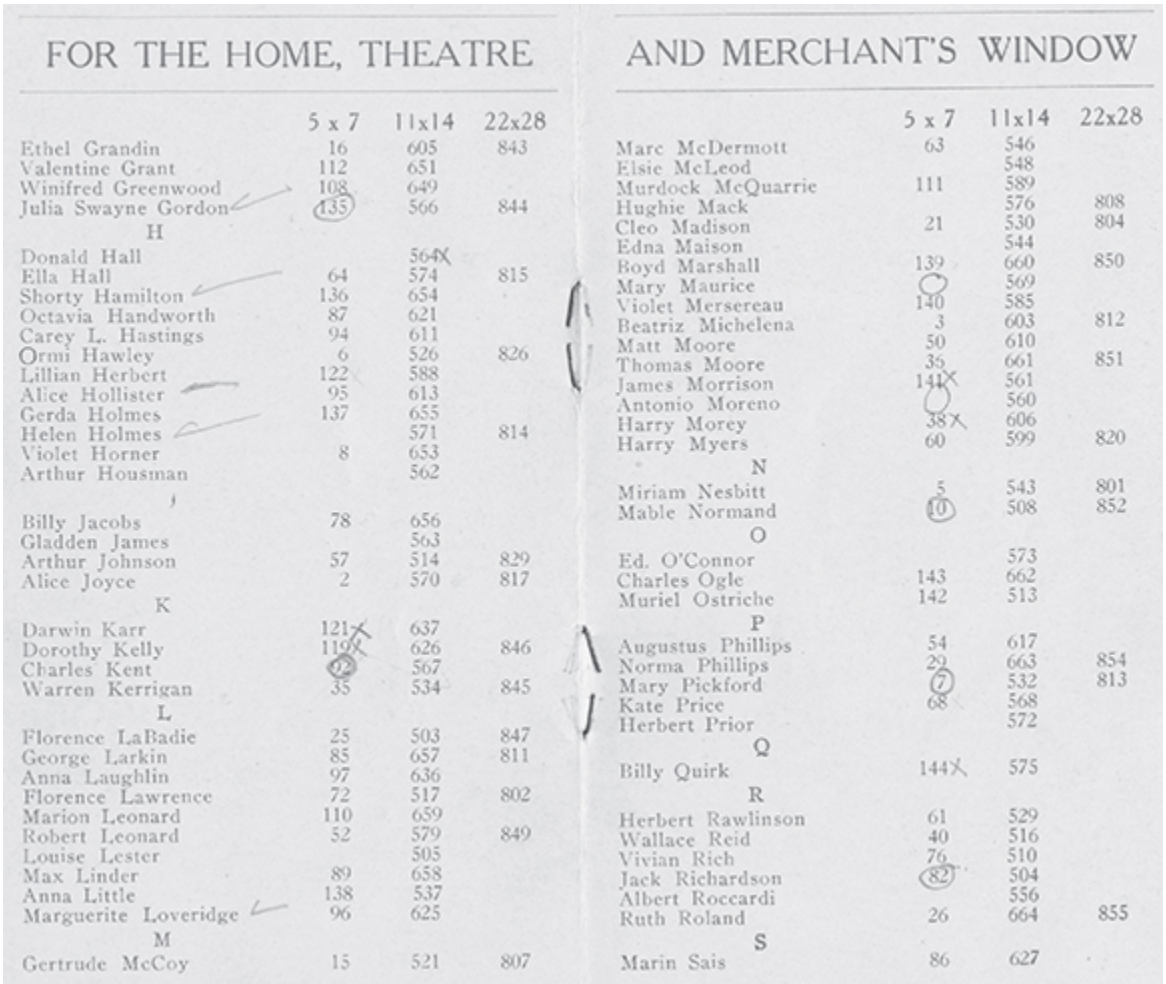
For 50 cents, Wyanoak would supply theater managers with a photographically illustrated one-sheet featuring “Beautiful Photos of Your Favorites.” Audience members admiring the poster learned that individual pictures “Can Now Be Obtained by Placing Your Order at the Ticket Window,” and Wyanoak offered theater managers a 50 percent commission on any orders they were able to solicit.[13] Hoffman’s collection contains several different editions of the Wyanoak catalogue, a small, stapled pamphlet containing an alphabetical listing of film favorites, and an indication of the sizes in which their portraits were available. The photos are offered “For the Home, Theatre, and Merchant’s Window,” suggesting that movie fans were seen as the primary customers. Portraits of every star listed were available in the default size of 11 × 14 inches. A smaller number could also be obtained as 5 × 7s, while fewer than half were marketed in the 22 × 28 inches “half-sheet” size. Only the biggest stars, such as Pearl White, were available in all three sizes; further down the list were lesser celebrities, like Lois Weber, in two sizes; marginal figures such as Donald Hall and Louise Lester could only be had in the standard 11 × 14 size. Prices depended not only on size, but on quantity and coloration. A black-and-white 5 × 7 portrait sold for 5 cents, but a hand-colored copy was 10 cents. The most expensive single items were hand-colored half-sheets at $1.25 each or $12.50 per dozen. Hoffman would check off various items that he had ordered (and which still can be found in the collection). Although he preferred collecting these portraits in the smaller 5 × 7 size, in the case of Donald Hall, who was only available in 11 × 14, he paid extra for the larger size.

Figure 26.3 “Front of House” 8 × 10 inches scene still from *False Colours* (1914). Note pin holes in corners indicating use in theater lobby. Courtesy of the Museum of the Moving Image, New York.

Between January and May of 1915, according to surviving correspondence in the collection, Hoffman also tried to acquire such portraits by writing directly to various studios, including Vitagraph, Broncho, Majestic, and Keystone. A true collector, he kept not only the replies, but the envelopes (with their elegant corporate logos) in which they were received. Unfortunately, the responses were not always satisfactory. On January 11, 1915, Keystone returned the 20 cents in postage he had sent them for a picture of Charlie Chaplin, noting that "Charles Chaplin is no longer in our employ." Majestic did send him a price list, but their 5 × 7s were 15 cents each, triple what Wyanoak was asking. Avoiding the studios, he wrote directly to Mary Pickford a few months later, offering praise along with a request for a picture. "It was very kind of you to write me your appreciation of my work," read the reply. "I sincerely thank you for the compliments you paid me. As soon as my pictures arrive from the photographer's I will gladly forward you one." Her letter, dated May 13,

1915, is signed with a rubber stamp signature. But some busy secretary personalized this response, and Pickford paid for postage *twice* – the first time only to say that a picture would arrive in a subsequent mailing. The expense of responding to queries like this, multiplied by the thousands, could only be justified if the stars felt that maintaining their connection to fans like Hoffman was worth the price.

Figure 26.4 Two pages from an undated Wyanoak Publishing Company catalogue of movie star portraits, with notations by Hoffman. Courtesy of the Museum of the Moving Image, New York.



FOR THE HOME, THEATRE AND MERCHANT'S WINDOW

	5 x 7	11x14	22x28
Ethel Grandin	16	605	843
Valentine Grant	112	651	
Winifred Greenwood	108	649	
Julia Swayne Gordon	135	566	844
H			
Donald Hall		564	
Ella Hall	64	574	815
Shorty Hamilton	136	654	
Octavia Handworth	87	621	
Carey L. Hastings	94	611	
Ormi Hawley	6	526	826
Lillian Herbert	122	588	
Alice Hollister	95	613	
Gerda Holmes	137	655	
Helen Holmes		571	814
Violet Horner	8	653	
Arthur Housman		562	
J			
Billy Jacobs	78	656	
Gladden James		563	
Arthur Johnson	57	514	829
Alice Joyce	2	570	817
K			
Darwin Karr	121	637	
Dorothy Kelly	119	626	846
Charles Kent	92	567	
Warren Kerrigan	35	534	845
L			
Florence LaBadie	25	503	847
George Larkin	85	657	811
Anna Laughlin	97	636	
Florence Lawrence	72	517	802
Marion Leonard	110	659	
Robert Leonard	52	579	849
Louise Lester		505	
Max Linder	89	658	
Anna Little	138	537	
Marguerite Loveridge	96	625	
M			
Gertrude McCoy	15	521	807

	5 x 7	11x14	22x28
Marc McDermott	63	546	
Elsie McLeod		548	
Murdock McQuarrie	111	589	
Hughie Mack		576	808
Cleo Madison	21	530	804
Edna Maison		544	
Boyd Marshall	139	660	850
Mary Maurice		569	
Violet Mersereau	140	585	
Beatriz Michelena	3	603	812
Matt Moore	50	610	
Thomas Moore	35	661	851
James Morrison	141	561	
Antonio Moreno		560	
Harry Morey	38	606	
Harry Myers	60	599	820
N			
Miriam Nesbitt	5	543	801
Mable Normand	10	508	852
O			
Ed. O'Connor		573	
Charles Ogle	143	662	
Muriel Ostriche	142	513	
P			
Augustus Phillips	54	617	
Norma Phillips	29	663	854
Mary Pickford	7	532	813
Kate Price	68	568	
Herbert Prior		572	
Q			
Billy Quirk	144	575	
R			
Herbert Rawlinson	61	529	
Wallace Reid	40	516	
Vivian Rich	76	510	
Jack Richardson	82	504	
Albert Roccardi		556	
Ruth Roland	26	664	855
S			
Marin Sais	86	627	

Commuting to the Movies

Hoffman relocated to Germantown, a suburb of Philadelphia, by the end of the summer of 1914. He lived in a suite of furnished rooms at the

Wissahickon Apartments on Queen Lane, directly across from the local railroad station, and began to explore the local Germantown theaters as well as several downtown theaters in Philadelphia. But he also continued attending theaters in Manhattan, a habit he had begun while still living on Staten Island. Indeed, the number of Manhattan film programs in the collection jumps dramatically after his move to Germantown. Once again, he might simply have neglected to save those earlier programs, but given the pack-rat qualities he had already developed, this seems unlikely. In fact, he may actually have *increased* his attendance at New York's picture palaces after realizing that it was not much harder for him to reach midtown Manhattan by train from Germantown than via the combined ferry boat and subway rides required to get there from Staten Island.

Hoffman had begun attending the Vitagraph Theatre, on Broadway at 44th Street, in April of 1914. After time off for his summer at Point Pleasant, he would come back fairly regularly, as a commuter, at least through December 1915. Vitagraph was the first producer to open its own flagship theater on Broadway, where it did its best to upgrade the filmgoing experience. "The management respectfully requests that patrons refrain from loud talking during the entertainment," urged a note in the program for *The Battle Cry of Peace*, "as numerous complaints have been received that audible remarks are disturbing." I have seen no similar comment in any of the other programs Hoffman collected. His affection for the Vitagraph would appear to be documented in the only set of ticket stubs in the collection, two seats in the Orchestra Loge for Christmas night, December 25, 1914. "Merry Xmas from Mother" is penciled on the envelope. This was the night that Hoffman saw Sidney Drew and other Vitagraph players, live, in a one act play called *What the Moon Saw*. The feature, almost as much of a treat, was a madcap tour of the Vitagraph studios called *How Cissy Made Good*, filled with behind-the-scenes footage and cameo appearances by most of the Vitagraph acting company. Mrs. Hoffman obviously knew just what her son wanted for Christmas.

The Vitagraph is the only Broadway house Hoffman is known to have attended while he still lived in New York, and for some months after he moved to Philadelphia it remained the only Manhattan theater he seems to have patronized. Once, in November 1914, he came up from Philadelphia to

see Universal's six-reel *Damon and Pythias* at the New York Theatre (Oscar Hammerstein's old Olympia Music Hall on Broadway and 44th Street). The following month he visited Wallack's Theatre, 254 West 42nd Street, another legitimate house, which was screening *The Book of Nature*, a documentary by zoologist Raymond Ditmars that featured "the only pictures ever taken of GUNDA, man killing elephant now on exhibition in New York." But between August and December of 1915 Hoffman was a regular visitor at half-a-dozen Manhattan picture palaces, especially the Strand, the Broadway, and the Knickerbocker.

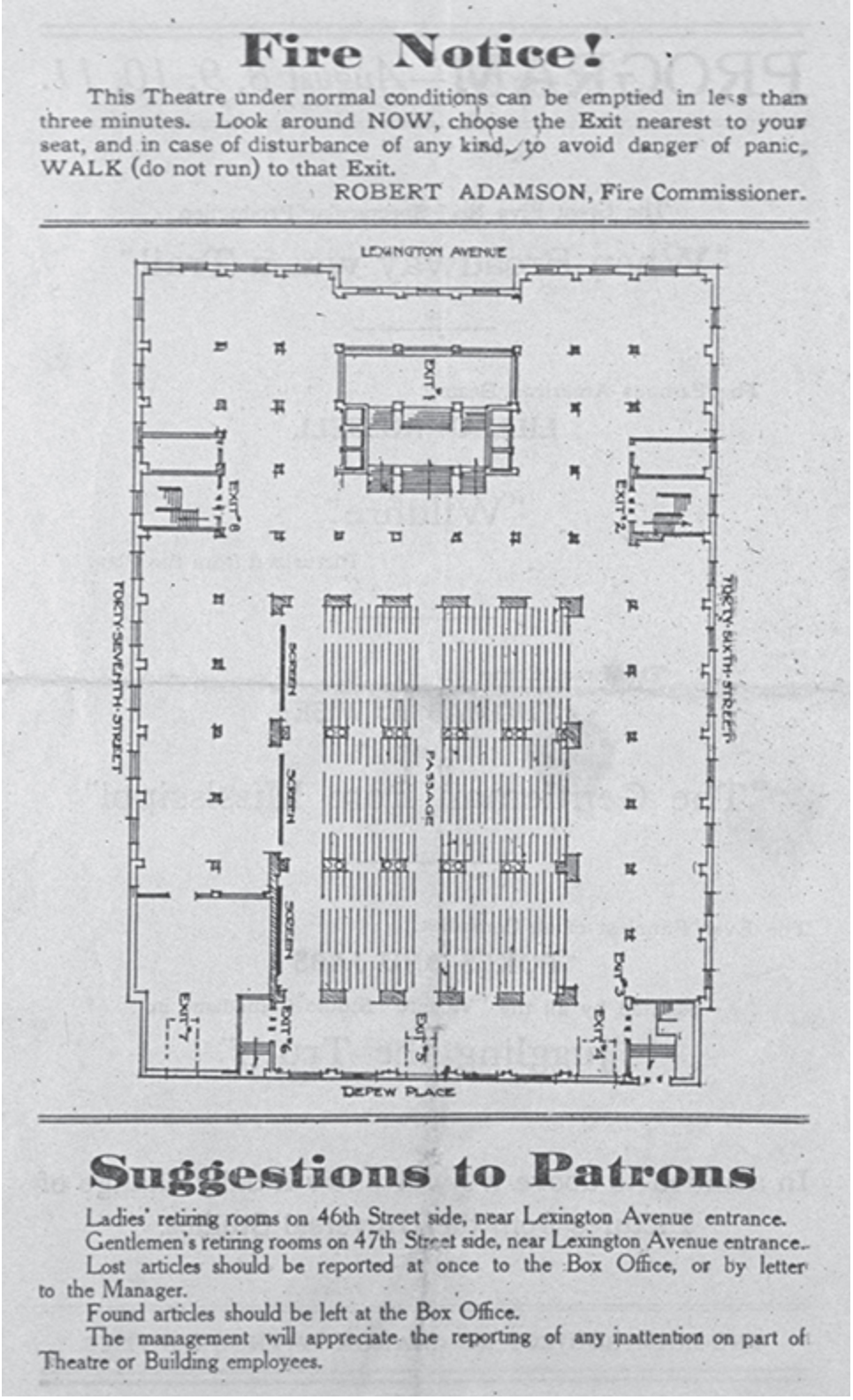
Perhaps the most unusual program in Hoffman's collection documents an August 1915 visit to a triplex theater housed in New York's Grand Central Palace, a large hotel adjacent to the New York Central's railroad terminal. The theater screened three different programs, simultaneously, on three adjacent screens: "Four miles of the best photoplays for 10 cts." There appears to have been no wall or barrier separating the three halls, and audiences were encouraged to move from one to another for a single 10 cent admission. Programs were slightly outdated features and shorts from World and Universal. Music, apparently designed to suit each film equally well, was provided by a single Wurlitzer organ. The films were said to be screened "in Broad Daylight and in Brilliant Night Illumination," and the floor plan suggests back projection was used to achieve this. It is unclear if this venue was an open-air roof garden, or what David Hulfish describes as a "day-light theater," one in which the auditorium lights remained on, with conical shades keeping their direct light from the screen.[14] The unusual arrangement seems to have been designed to attract travelers with extra time on their hands between train connections. Hoffman apparently never went back.

Hoffman began attending the Strand, or at least saving its programs, in August of 1915, nineteen months after its sensational opening as Broadway's first elaborate motion picture theater. The five programs he saw here were all Paramount releases, and included two Mary Pickford features. Although manager Samuel L. Rothapfel had moved on, the Strand was still promoting itself as "New York's Photo Play Palace" and emphasizing its extensive musical program, under the baton of Carl Edouarde. The show that season ran continuously from noon until 11:30 p.m., with afternoon

prices of 10 cents and 50 cents, and evening shows at 15 cents and 50 cents – suggesting that the half-dollar top was a price point the theater was loath to violate. Cartoons and short comedies were still avoided during August and September, but by December the management was no longer above such programming. Despite the Strand's stature as Paramount's flagship, it prominently featured a reissue of a D. W. Griffith Biograph short, *The Battle*, on the same bill as the premiere of Mary Pickford's *Rags* – a booking which indicates that these Griffith reissues were not just targeted at the smaller theaters, but could hold their own on Broadway with the latest Paramount features.

A few blocks down from the Strand, which was at 47th Street, was a more modest Paramount house, the Broadway Theatre on 41st Street. While its program also ran continuously from 11:30 a.m. to 11:15 p.m., admission was only 10–25 cents, with no differential between matinee and evening prices. The theater appears to have been showing the same quality Paramount line as the Strand (it premiered *A Girl of Yesterday*, with Mary Pickford and aviator Glenn Martin, the week of October 10), but only charged half the Strand's admission price. General ambiance, and the Broadway's far more modest musical program, must have accounted for the considerable difference in price. Although a Paramount house, the Broadway also featured shorts with non-Paramount stars like Mabel Normand and Charlie Chaplin. For the week of September 26, 1915, in support of the latest Elsie Janis Bosworth feature, the Broadway included two different Paramount non-fiction reels; *Judith of Bethulia* ("Featuring Paramount's Screen Favorite, Blanche Sweet"); one of the first Keystone productions, *The Diving Girl*; and *The Little Tease*, described as "with LILLIAN GISH," although this lost Griffith Biograph is generally thought to have starred Mae Marsh. Hoffman attended four times within ten weeks, and probably felt that he had gotten his money's worth.

Figure 26.5 Floor plan of the triplex cinema at the Grand Central Palace, New York, August 1915. Courtesy of the Museum of the Moving Image, New York.



Fire Notice!

This Theatre under normal conditions can be emptied in less than three minutes. Look around NOW, choose the Exit nearest to your seat, and in case of disturbance of any kind, to avoid danger of panic, WALK (do not run) to that Exit.

ROBERT ADAMSON, Fire Commissioner.

Suggestions to Patrons

Ladies' retiring rooms on 46th Street side, near Lexington Avenue entrance.

Gentlemen's retiring rooms on 47th Street side, near Lexington Avenue entrance.

Lost articles should be reported at once to the Box Office, or by letter to the Manager.

Found articles should be left at the Box Office.

The management will appreciate the reporting of any inattention on part of Theatre or Building employees.

The most significant of the Broadway theaters Hoffman patronized that season was the Knickerbocker on 38th Street. The Knickerbocker was

Triangle's flagship, and Hoffman was there for its opening attraction, when Douglas Fairbanks became an instant screen success in *The Lamb*. Music was important at the Knickerbocker, with the program providing the name of the composer responsible for the specially prepared score that accompanied every feature or short. The Griffith productions, for example, were generally credited to Joseph Carl Breil, already famous for his score for *The Birth of a Nation*. But unlike the other great Broadway picture palaces, the Knickerbocker had no additional musical program – no overtures, no interludes. Instead, twice a day (2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.), audiences were presented with a weekly release from D. W. Griffith, Mack Sennett, and Thomas Ince, and paid well for the privilege. Admission on evenings and Saturday matinees ran from 50 cents to 2 dollars ("other matinees" were only half this scale). But by the thirteenth week of the season evening prices had come down a bit (25 cents to 2 dollars), and matinee tickets (25–50 cents) were almost in line with those of the Strand. Triangle shut down the theater for a week at the beginning of 1916, cut admission prices, and brought in Rothapfel to institute a new management style. Hoffman never went back there again, either.

Only once, apparently, did Hoffman visit the Savoy Theatre, at Broadway and 34th Street. Every day the Savoy presented a different feature from World, Universal, VLSE, or some other second-tier distributor (no Triangle or Paramount films here). An unadvertised selection of shorts filled up each bill. "Program Subject to Change Providing Advanced Bookings are not up to Our Standard," warned the weekly listing for December 20, 1915, which suggests that the exchanges supplying these titles were not always to be depended on. As if on cue, Hoffman had to scratch out the announced feature for December 20 (Universal's *The Nature Man*), and write in instead, "Digby Bell in *Father and the Boys*," another Universal release. Such annotations are often seen on surviving vaudeville programs; Hoffman, continuing the tradition, appears to have regarded movie theater programs as something between a diary and a check list.

Rothapfel, whom Hoffman seems to have missed at both the Knickerbocker and the Strand, opened the Rialto, "The Temple of the Motion Picture," on April 22, 1916. This time Hoffman was there for the grand opening, which featured an extensive musical program involving

singers, dancers, a violin soloist, and “the Rialto Male Quartet,” in addition to the usual orchestra and theater organ. Triangle supplied the feature film, Douglas Fairbanks in *The Good Bad-Man*. This form of presentation may have been the wave of the future, but regardless of what Marcus Loew argued, Hoffman was buying tickets to movies, not theaters. For whatever reason, his appearance at the opening of the Rialto (which for many years dominated the intersection of Seventh Avenue and 42nd Street) is the last evidence we have of his traveling from Philadelphia to Manhattan just to see a movie.

In and Around Germantown

At the time Hoffman was living there, forty-one “Photoplay Theatres” were listed in the *Philadelphia Evening Ledger*’s Photoplay Calendar.[15] Despite the frequent trips he made to visit various theaters in New York, Hoffman was able to take full advantage of Philadelphia’s downtown picture palaces, and was also a steady customer at several of the neighborhood theaters he found within a few blocks of his new apartment in Germantown.

In Germantown, the theaters Hoffman attended were not Broadway-style picture palaces, but neither were they suburban airdomes or scruffy nickelodeons. These were elegantly appointed neighborhood houses, some of them seating thousands, often constructed by large theater chains employing distinguished theater architects. His collection contains numerous programs and fliers from three of these theaters, all situated on or near busy Germantown Avenue, about half a mile from his apartment.

His favorite was certainly the Germantown Theatre, 5508 Germantown Avenue, at the intersection of School Lane. Built in 1910, the 1,168-seat theater was considered “the pride of Germantown.” When he first began attending the theater it was showing an eclectic mixture of licensed releases, including George Kleine’s Italian import *Spartacus*, Broncho Billy westerns, Biograph and Vitagraph shorts, and the “Germantown Theater War News,” a specially edited newsreel.[16] But that same week (September 28, 1914), the Germantown’s program announced that it would subsequently be the exclusive local showcase for the Paramount program,

one of only six first run Paramount houses in the Philadelphia region. From that point on, the cover of the Germantown's weekly program always reminded its audience that the theater was "Devoted to the Presentation of Paramount Pictures." But Paramount never seems to have been able to provide the Germantown with a full week of programming, and it continued to run features from VLSE, Metro, Pathé, and other producers (sometimes even featuring one of these on the cover instead of the Paramount offering), as well as a variety of short films and at least one serial, Vitagraph's *The Goddess*. Between September 2 and October 21, 1915, the Germantown also screened six Biograph reissues (*The Battle of Elderbush Gulch*, *Death's Marathon*, *The Sheriff's Baby*, *The Wanderer*, *Oil and Water*, and *The Girl and Her Trust*), with the names of D. W. Griffith and his stars now prominently featured. Such programming was clearly designed to exploit the concurrent run of *The Birth of a Nation* at the Chestnut Street Opera House.[17]

Hoffman saved the weekly Germantown programs, as well as whatever heralds (featuring individual titles) the theater made available. He scrupulously annotated these heralds, sometimes indicating "Didn't See," or occasionally amending the printed "Germantown" information to indicate that he had seen the film elsewhere (the Stanley, for example). What this tells us is that while he needed to go to the theater each week to pick up the program, the promotional heralds were being distributed separately, perhaps even at other locations.[18]

Just as he had done earlier at the Gem, Hoffman was able to acquire "front of house" stills for several of the features listed in the Germantown programs: seventeen of the thirty-three stills in his collection, representing ten different films, can be associated with screenings at this theater (in fact, only five stills, representing four different films, cannot be traced to screenings at either the Gem or the Germantown). These two theaters were clearly unusual in allowing him to get his hands on their advertising material. Did he have a personal relationship with someone on the staff? Did the theaters make a habit of distributing their obsolete paper to interested audience members? Was he able to locate their dumpster? Whatever the explanation, we should recognize that Hoffman was very

lucky in being able to acquire any theatrical posters or stills, items which were never intended to be available to “civilians.”

The Germantown’s printed program offered its audience a weekly dose of movie star gossip (usually regarding Paramount favorites), as well as boilerplate information on seating and show times. Matinees were “continuous” from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m., and evening shows, in similar fashion, from 6:45 to 11:00 p.m. This scheduling mixed elements of continuous vaudeville programming (come in whenever you like) with the set curtain times of a legitimate theater. For example, the program for the week of December 27, 1914 announced that “For the convenience of our matinee patrons, we will show the main picture as near as possible to 3.30 P.M.” This meant that audiences had the flexibility of choosing to see the supporting program of shorts either before or after the “main picture” (or not at all). The scheduled break between 5:00 and 6:45 p.m. would have given the orchestra the opportunity for a bite of dinner.

Occasionally, even such mundane announcements as schedule changes can reveal a good deal about the everyday problems associated with running a picture show. The October 13, 1915 showing of Pathé’s *The Closing Net* was canceled, audiences were told, due to the film’s “not having been passed by the Pennsylvania State Board of Censors.” While we have plenty of evidence regarding last minute program changes during this period, the way this information was presented here also tells us: (1) that the theater placed the blame entirely on the heads of the Censor Board; (2) that distribution schedules were at the mercy of untimely Censor Board decisions; (3) that the management had no fear of being associated with what some might consider a censorable production; and (4) that this Pathé title was not replaced by another Pathé subject, but by a film from an entirely different distributor (VLSE’s *Tillie’s Tomato Surprise*), suggesting a nice degree of cooperation among rival exchanges in such situations.

Another apparently minor announcement reminds audiences that they could pick up the latest edition of *Picture Progress*, a house paper issued by Paramount. “Ask the Cashiers or Ushers for a copy” (week of January 3, 1916). Hoffman’s collection includes six scattered issues of *Picture Progress* dating from October 1915 to January 1917 (this last issue marking the chronological end point of his collection). Because of his regular

attendance at the Germantown, a theater which we know distributed this paper, we would expect more than six issues of *Picture Progress* to have survived in Hoffman's collection. But just as we do not know why the collection as a whole stops suddenly in January 1917, we are also ignorant of exactly how or why *any* of the specific items here managed to survive. According to donor testimony, the collection was passed on to a friend, William R. Bogert, Jr., who gathered it up and stored it away not long after Hoffman's death (apparently quite a few years after the collection was assembled). But for a collection as broad as this one, there are a number of obvious omissions, including Photoplay Editions, celluloid pinback buttons, special souvenir programs (*Cabiria*, *The Birth of a Nation*), licensed movie star items, and, in fact, almost any three-dimensional artifacts whatsoever. (The collection does contain a small, twelve-page stamp album, featuring images of Mary Pickford, Ford Sterling, Pearl White, and other favorites.) Is it really possible that Hoffman failed to acquire a single example of any of these common collectibles? Private collections, especially those which include materials as disparate as Hoffman's, tend not to be stored in discrete, conveniently identified packages, especially after the collector's death. It would be very likely that parts of Hoffman's collection were stored on another shelf, or in a different room, and when the time came to gather them up some portion was simply left behind. Perhaps William Bogert separated a few items himself, or maybe some things were removed before the material came to him. Nevertheless, the existence of nearly unbroken runs of certain theater programs or fan magazines suggests that over time the collection has generally managed to avoid significant pilferage.

Two blocks west of the Germantown was the Orpheum, a 2,000-seat playhouse at 42 West Chelten Avenue which opened in 1912. Hoffman was also a regular at the Orpheum throughout his period in Germantown, except for a four-month stretch in the summer of 1915. We know he was still in town that summer because he continued to haunt the Germantown. Did the Orpheum move away from picture shows that summer? Or was it just more uncomfortable than the competition during the sweltering Philadelphia summer?

Admission to the Orpheum, one of the Stanley theaters, was only 5 cents and 10 cents when Hoffman first started going there the week of January

25, 1915, for a screening of one of the earliest World War I features, *The War of Wars; or The Franco-German Invasion*. Show times were continuous from 2:00 to 5:00 and 7:00 to 11:00 p.m. For most of 1915 its programs were an assortment of releases from VLSE, Fox, Universal, and World, but on December 6 the Orpheum signed up for a second run of the Triangle program, "direct from the Chestnut Street Opera House." Ticket prices now jumped to 10 cents and 15 cents, screening times were firmly scheduled for 2:15, 7:00, and 9:00 p.m., and regulars were invited to "Leave Your Name & Address to Have Program Mailed."

Perhaps the Orpheum is where Hoffman acquired the latest datable poster in his collection, a one-sheet for *Mutual Weekly* no. 76, which was released during the first week of July 1916. Newsreel posters have a very short shelf-life, employ minimal graphics, and tend to contain little more than a listing of subjects in that week's reel. Consequently, they are extremely rare from any period and even today are collected only by completists whose interests go beyond graphics, stars, or favorite film titles. Acquiring and preserving this poster was not the act of a simple movie fan: fans have favorites, but collectors accumulate. Hoffman certainly liked Mary Pickford, but it was saving a newsreel poster that marks him as a true collector.[19]

The most modest of the local theaters Hoffman frequented was the Rialto, located at 6153 Germantown Avenue, about twice as far from his apartment as the Germantown Theatre (but like all the others probably situated along the same streetcar line). Located on the corner of Tulpehocken Street, this 834-seat house was smaller and older than any of its rivals. The Rialto communicated with its customers via direct mail, and between February and May 1916 Hoffman received a hand-addressed postcard from them each week. Admission was a flat 10 cents, with no matinees but continuous evening showings from 7:00 through 11:00 p.m. Although some of the Germantown theaters would run selected features for as long as two days, the Rialto ran each program for one day only, six days a week (no theaters in Philadelphia showed films on Sundays). Films from Triangle, Bluebird, and Famous Players were featured most prominently, while other programs were not identified by manufacturer but merely described as "superb" or "extraordinary." Nothing was said about "exclusive" or "first run"

programs. The Rialto simply gave viewers a chance to catch up on films they may have missed at the area's more imposing theaters, and at a fraction of the cost. Because Hoffman's name was on the mailing list, he also received a special promotional mailing from the Rialto ("the finest photoplays at a nominal admission") along with a free pass to the July 4, 1916 showing of the first episode of the George Kleine serial *Gloria's Romance*, starring Billie Burke. The pass is still in the collection, probably because Hoffman had already seen the program two months earlier at the Arcadia (see below).

There were certainly other theaters in Hoffman's neighborhood, some of them just as impressive and convenient as the Germantown or the Orpheum. But the collection has no trace of the Cayuga, the Lehigh Palace, the Pelham, the New Lyric, or the Vernon Palace, all of which competed for customers on Germantown Avenue. It seems unlikely that none of them ever distributed any collectible paper. But instead of flitting from one theater to another, Hoffman appears to have found a few theaters he liked and simply became a regular customer.

Downtown Philly

Philadelphia's own picture palaces were a short ride away, most near the downtown city hall area. Hoffman most frequently visited the Stanley, but we also have record of him attending the Arcadia, the Globe, and the Chestnut Street Opera House.

The Stanley, located on Market Street above Sixteenth, was a 1,700-seat theater that had opened on April 25, 1914. *Moving Picture World* considered it "The Most Beautiful Picture Theater in the Quaker City."[20] This was a first run Paramount house, and Hoffman attended at least a dozen times, most frequently between February and June 1915, when the theater offered more than the usual number of Mary Pickford films. Programs boasted that "The Stanley Symphony Orchestra is composed of Eminent Soloists & Distinguished Members of the Philadelphia Orchestra," yet prices were modest, ranging from 10–25 cents, while performances ran

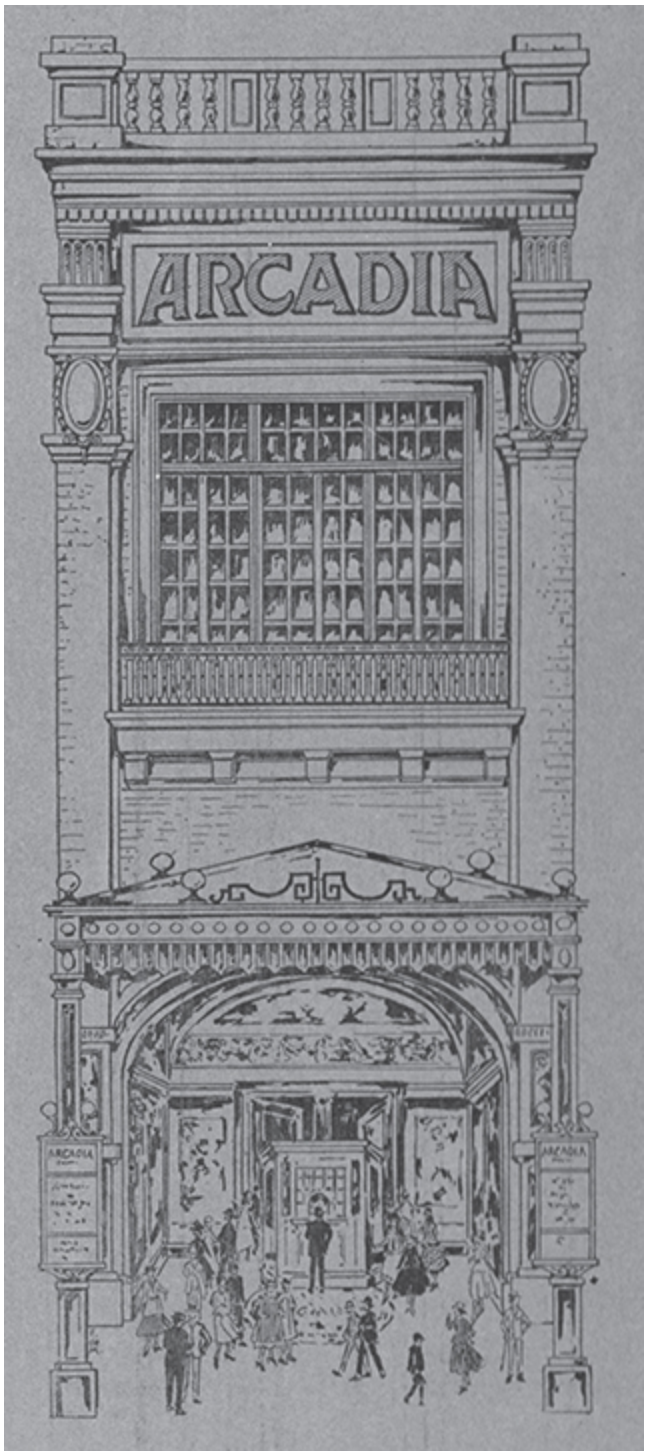
continuously from 11:00 a.m. to 11:15 p.m. (the last showing of the feature was always set for 10:00 p.m.).[21]

Between October and December 1915, Hoffman had made six trips to New York to attend Triangle's Broadway showcase, the Knickerbocker Theater. But he also caught four Triangle programs at their Philadelphia flagship, the Chestnut Street Opera House, 1013 Chestnut Street, in October and November. The lack of any distracting musical interludes echoed the presentation policy in New York, as did the prices – 25 cents to 2 dollars in the evening, 25 and 50 cents at matinees. In a wonderful example of film buffery, Hoffman corrected what he saw as an error in the Opera House's printed program for the Thomas Ince feature *The Golden Claw* (week of November 1, 1915), scratching out the name of Robert Dunbar in the role of "Bert's father" and substituting that of J. Barney Sherry! Today, the *American Film Institute Catalog* echoes the printed information. But considering Hoffman's rigorous attention to such matters, those credits might be worth another look. In any case, by December Hoffman had abandoned the Chestnut Street Opera House and began following the Triangle program at the Orpheum in Germantown, where prices were far lower.[22]

In April of 1915 Hoffman visited the Globe Theatre at Market and Juniper Streets. The Globe was a 1,710-seat picture house which had just opened the previous year. It was playing an extended run of *Hypocrites!*, which it accompanied with a chorus, an enlarged orchestra, and an organ. The supporting bill included two comedies, a news weekly, and a scenic, along with a range of musical interludes. A specially prepared musical accompaniment for the feature was drawn from the works of Wagner, Massenet, Beethoven, and other classical favorites. The Globe's printed program (which featured interior and exterior views of the theater on its cover) provided both a plot summary and a cast list, even highlighting the appearance of Margaret Edwards, notorious for her nude portrayal of "Truth." But there is no mention of the film's director (Lois Weber), production company (Bosworth), or distributor (Paramount). Admission prices ranged from 10–50 cents. *Hypocrites!* would have been regarded by exhibitors as a "delicate sell," and the Globe made sure to position it as a "wonderful allegorical film drama," and not a nudist picture. In a rather

pricey promotional gambit, those who had seen the film were invited to "write their views in essay form, reviewing *Hypocrites!* from any angle or viewpoint." Four cash awards, with a top prize of $100, were to be given out "at the close of the competition," whenever that might be. Hoffman must have been impressed, because he saw the film again in June at the Germantown Theater – where, thanks to their use of the official Paramount/Bosworth herald, everyone was properly credited.

Figure 26.6 Front cover of program for the Arcadia, 1529 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, week of May 8, 1916. Courtesy of the Museum of the Moving Image, New York.



Hoffman saved only one program from the Arcadia, which was located a few blocks west at 1529 Chestnut Street. The theater had opened in 1914, and when Hoffman got there in May 1916 it was running the Triangle program on a split-week bill. The show ran continuously from 10:00 a.m., with the very reasonable admission price of 15 cents for matinees and 25

cents at night. It was at the Arcadia that Hoffman saw Billie Burke in *Gloria's Romance*, saving himself another trip to the Rialto. Unlike the Knickerbocker or the Chestnut Street Opera House, the Arcadia did not offer an orchestra playing original music by Joseph Carl Breil, but merely "Organ Music, Classic and Popular and Always of the Best."

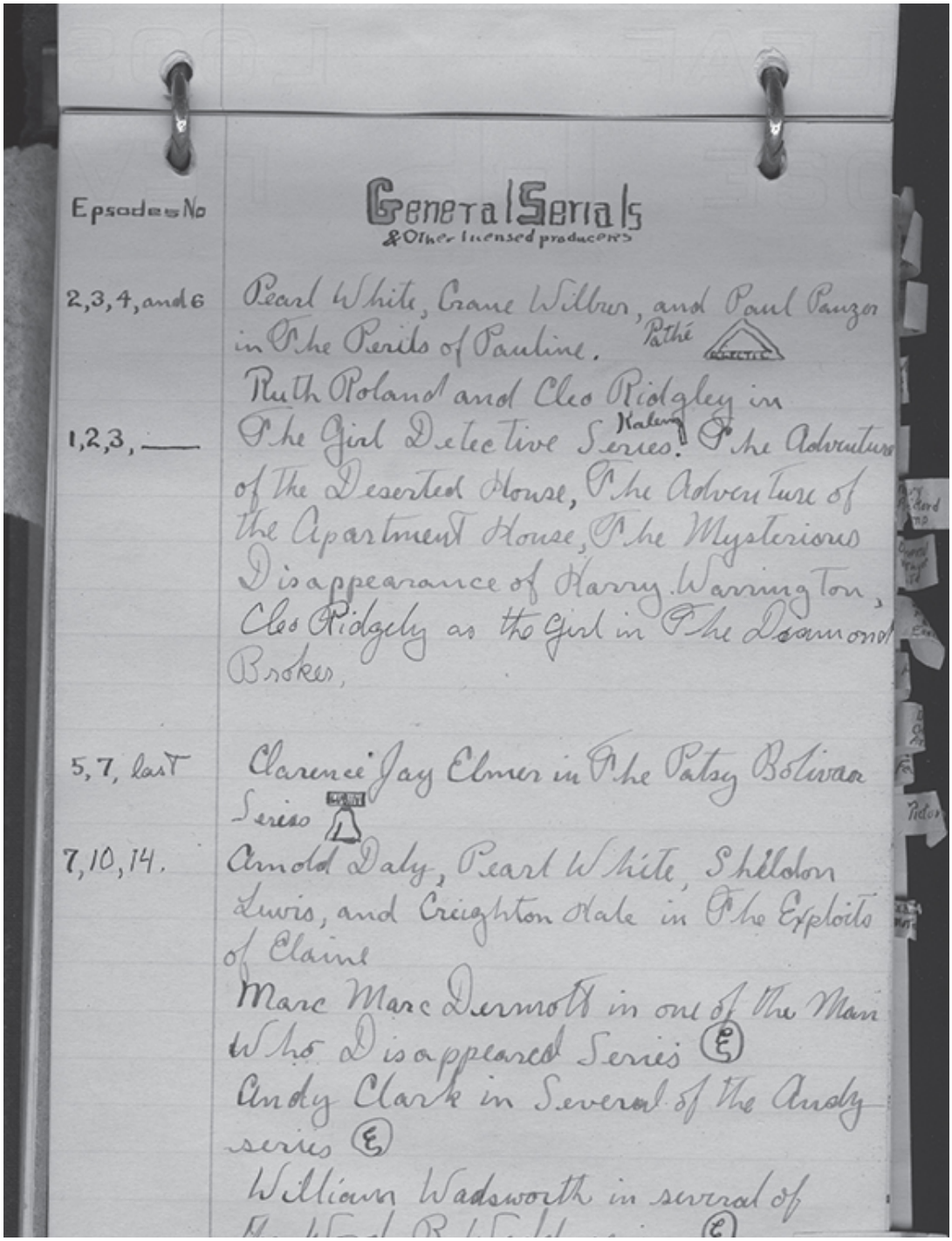
During the week of May 15, 1916, Hoffman continued following the Triangle program around Philadelphia, now stopping in at the Victoria Theatre, on Market Street above 9th. The highlighted feature for the first half of the week was, nominally, Dorothy Gish in *Sold for Marriage*. But much larger billing on the weekly flier was given to "Chas. Chaplin" in *The Floor Walker*, a Mutual short released that very day. The Victoria boasted that it was "The Home of the Wonderful Kimball Organ," but its program was a simple sheet of pulp paper, reminiscent of what the Staten Island Odeon had been using in 1913. The show ran continuously from 9:00 a.m.; admission was a flat 10 cents, but after 6:30 p.m. and on weekends "reserved seats" were available for 20 cents.

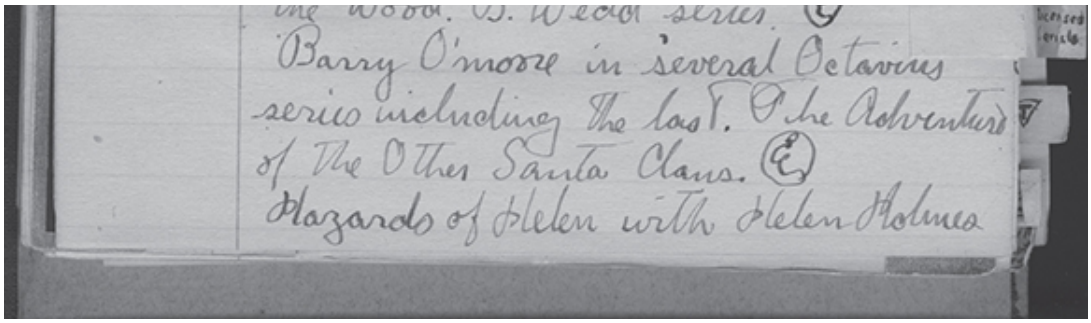
The Database

No conventional Hoffman diary survives, but the collection does include a remarkable handwritten database recording not just the names and stars of the films he had seen, but their production company, distributor, and often their length (in reels). It takes the form of a small loose-leaf binder divided into six main sections: (1) Paramount Pictures; (2) General Film Co. and other licensed producers; (3) Mutual; (4) Universal; (5) Miscelanious [*sic*] Features; (6) Pictures of Players. Within each section there are further divisions by producing unit, so that the Paramount section is subdivided into Famous Players, Bosworth, and The Jesse Lasky Feature Play Co. Occasional stars featured by these producers are given separate pages of their own. For example, within the Paramount section Mary Pickford's films are listed on her own pages using the following format: *Hearts Adrift* as Nina opposite Harold Lockwood; *In the Bishop's Carriage* as Mag, and so on. The Pickford section is followed by a subsection devoted to "FPF Presents Through Paramount Pictures," with a cross-indexing note to "See

Mary Pickford" for information on her films. All of these subsections could be accessed through small paper tabs pasted onto the right-hand margins.

Figure 26.7 Richard Hoffman's loose-leaf database, opened to section listing serials distributed by the General Film Company and other licensed producers. Note indexing tabs at right. Courtesy of the Museum of the Moving Image, New York.


Epsodes No
General Serials
& Other licensed producers
2,3,4, and 6
Pearl White, Crane Wilbur, and Paul Panzer in The Perils of Pauline.
Pathé
1,2,3, ____
Ruth Roland and Cleo Ridgley in The Girl Detective Series. The Adventure of The Deserted House, The Adventure of the Apartment House, The Mysterious Disappearance of Harry Warrington, Cleo Ridgely as the girl in The Diamond Broker.
Kalem
5, 7, last
Clarence Jay Elmer in The Patsy Bolivar Series
7, 10, 14.
Arnold Daly, Pearl White, Sheldon Lewis, and Creighton Hale in The Exploits of Elaine
Marc Marc Dermott in one of the Man Who Disappeared Series
Andy Clark in Several of the Andy series
William Wadsworth in several of


Barry O'moore in several Octavius
series including the last. The Adventures
of The Other Santa Claus.
Hazards of Helen with Helen Holmes

The specificity of some of these entries is impressive. Hoffman differentiates reissues whenever possible, and indicates, usually with an asterisk, films directed by D. W. Griffith for Biograph, Reliance, etc. No other director is singled out in this manner. *The Birth of a Nation* is listed with the "Reliance-Majestic-Mutual Subjects." Short subjects like the "Paramount Travel Series" are listed separately. The indication "1, 22, 25, 27, etc." suggests that this was not an attempt at a comprehensive filmography, only a list of specific titles seen by Hoffman. We see the same sort of notations for serials like *The Perils of Pauline* ("Episodes No. 2, 3, 4 and 6") and *The Exploits of Elaine* ("Episodes 7, 10, 14"). It may seem surprising that Hoffman failed to see more of these episodes, but he does not appear to have been a particular fan of serials, concentrating instead on Mary Pickford and the Triangle program.

The final section devoted to film releases includes such firms as World-Equitable, Metro, and "Box Office Attractions Company," the name he uses for the early Fox Film Corp. He lists only one Theda Bara film here, *The Devil's Daughter*, suggesting that she also was not a favorite. *Gertie the Dinosaurus – a Cartoon by Winsor McCay* is a rare example of a short subject sharing space with feature-length pictures. The last group of titles, "Miscelaneous [*sic*] Features Worthy of Note," includes *Cabiria*, *Scott's Dash for the South Pole*, *Are They Born or Made?*, and *Evening Ledger War Pictures*.

Section Six, again organized by distributor, is a more traditional scrapbook collage consisting of small head shots of various stars cut from newspapers or magazines. Mary Pickford, as usual, holds the most prominent place. The final page is headed "Where I Have Seen Players," and lists various sightings in both New York and Philadelphia, sometimes at theaters like the Vitagraph or the Republic (not otherwise mentioned in the

collection), but also at the Astor Hotel, at Shibe Park (a Philadelphia baseball stadium), “in front of the Lubin Studio,” at the Philadelphia Cricket Club (while a scene was being taken) and, most impressively, at the Pilot Studio in Yonkers. Hoffman was somehow able to visit this studio in the autumn of 1913, while Dustin Farnum was filming *Soldiers of Fortune*.

This remarkable database tells us a great deal about Hoffman’s methodical approach to his passion, but raises as many questions as it answers. The lone movie studio visit suggests that he did not have any special industry connections, but was instead operating aggressively from the outside. Short films appear only infrequently, mainly those of Pickford, Chaplin, Broncho Billy Anderson, and Tom Mix, as well as Griffith Biograph reissues and Ham and Bud comedies (!). Other than the words “of note” appearing in a few of the subheads, there are no value judgments whatsoever; the database is just a database. And does “of note” mean that he was not bothering to mention less worthy films he had seen?

On many of the pages we can see changes in the ink or the penmanship from one entry to the next, suggesting that the list was continually updated over time and not the result of some retrospective compilation project. But there is no indication as to why each section ends with the same rubber-stamped notation: “Up to Jan. 1916.” If Hoffman lost interest in the listing (even as he continued to collect programs and film magazines), why bother preparing the stamp?

Another question the database raises is how it relates to seven pieces of scrap paper also found in the collection, which list dates, theaters, and film titles. One says:

FRI. STRAND	
Rags	5
The Battle	1
Pathe News / Animated Weekly	1
Raskey’s Road Shows	1
	8

We can correlate this with Hoffman’s Strand Theatre program for the week of August 1, 1915. He is apparently jotting down the names of the

films he has seen that day, as well as their length in reels. Another scrap says:

FRI	8 + 7	15
SAT	19 + 4	23
SUN	8 + 9	17
MON	1 + 8	9
TUES	7	7
		71

Do the numbers relate to film reels, and does this indicate that he saw 71 reels of film over these five days, including 23 reels on Saturday alone? Are these the missing short subjects not otherwise accounted for in his collection of programs and heralds, as well as his database? If so, the surviving material would seem to mark only the tip of the iceberg as far as the extent of his filmgoing habits were concerned.

Finally, we need to consider just what this collector may have felt about the ultimate film collectible – the films themselves. There are only a few loose clippings in the collection, but one of them, from the *New York Times* of August 9, 1914, is a large display ad promoting the new Pathéscope Home Projector and its library of 28 mm films. Did Hoffman pursue this? There is no other evidence. The only scrap of motion picture film surviving in the collection is a twelve-frame 35 mm fragment from a western, dated by edge code to early 1916, containing two shots of a pair of Indians riding on horseback. As with so much of the collection, we don't know how he obtained this bit of film, what it is from, if it represents a solitary acquisition – or is just the tip of another iceberg.

Kathryn Fuller reminds us that while "we all go to the movies, we do not all invest moviegoing with the same emotional energy. The movie fan has always been a breed apart from the average person who occasionally drops in at a theater."[23] As was demonstrated at the Staten Island Odeon in 1913, this emotional energy might lure some in the audience over to the dark side, a fear that was commonly shared by progressive era social reformers. But the Odeon also produced Richard Hoffman, a different sort of movie fan, who found a way of channeling this energy, and even preserving it, through the creation of a remarkable personal archive.

Notes

1 "'Burglars, Sure,' Say Boys of Eight," *New-York Tribune*, March 12, 1913.

2 Material in the Museum of the Moving Image's Richard Hoffman collection can be found online at http://www.movingimage.us/site/collection/index.html.

3 Kathryn H. Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 116–19.

4 See, for example, the section on advertising in David Sherrill Hulfish, *Motion-Picture Work* (Chicago: American School of Correspondence, 1913), 33–7.

5 "A 'Crank Turner' Wants to Know," *Moving Picture World* 10, no. 9 (December 2, 1911): 739, quoted in Fuller, *At the Picture Show*, 135.

6 This portion of Ida Dudley Dale's diary can be seen in Phillip Papas and Lori Weintraub, *Images of America: Port Richmond* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2009), 76.

7 This notation is the only (possible) value judgment appearing anywhere in Hoffman's collection. He seems to have been more interested in checking off his encounters with these films than in recording his opinions, another distinction between the collector and the fan.

8 Sources for the remaining ten posters are harder to identify with any certainty; at least some of them may have been used on the Gem's "Exclusive Programme" nights, for which we have no specific titles.

9 The thirty-three stills represent seventeen different films; the eleven he (apparently) collected at the Gem are all from Mary Pickford films.

10 Neil Harris, "American Poster Collecting: A Fitful History," *American Art* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 11–39. See also Alain Weill, *The Poster: A Worldwide Survey and History* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1985), 80.

11 Charles Matlack Price, *Posters* (New York: Bricka, 1913), 142.

12 "Photographs of Moving Picture Actors," *Moving Picture World* 6, no. 2 (January 15, 1910): 50.

13 Wyanoak advertisement, *Motion Picture News* (April 3, 1915): 105.

14 Hulfish, *Motion-Picture Work*, 179. In any case, a “day-light theater” should not be confused with an airdome.

15 “Photoplay Calendar,” *Philadelphia Evening Ledger*, December 13, 1915.

16 Germantown Theatre Program, September 28, 1914. This date seems quite early for a specially edited “War News” reel; perhaps the situation reflected a large local German American population.

17 Hoffman’s database suggests that he had seen *The Birth of a Nation*, as well as *Cabiria*, both of which played at the Chestnut Street Opera House. But no program or herald survives to indicate when or where.

18 A number of heralds in the Hoffman collection bear the names of theaters other than those I discuss here (e.g., “Nixon’s”). But in such cases Hoffman has crossed out the location printed on the herald, or written “did not see” across the front.

19 One possibility is that he felt some connection with one of the items on the reel: “A Feminine Flight: Miss Ruth Law makes perilous trip on Staten Island in new Biplane.”

20 *Moving Picture World* 20, no. 7 (May 16, 1914): 948. Thanks to Charles Musser for this quotation.

21 According to Irving Glazer, in *Philadelphia Theaters* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), 17, the theater was the work of “W. H. Hoffman Company, architects.” There may have been a family relationship, although Richard Hoffman does not seem to have come to Philadelphia until several months after the Stanley opened, and then only attended the theater once that year. For a time I thought that Richard Hoffman might have been related to Hugh Hoffman or Milton E. Hoffman, both of whom worked for various studios during this period. But the particular firms these men were associated with are, in fact, poorly represented in the collection, and I have been unable to establish any personal connection.

22 An undated herald for *The Eternal City* (1915) reveals that Hoffman also saw this film at the Chestnut Street Opera House, probably before it became a Triangle showcase.

23 Fuller, *At the Picture Show*, 116.

Part VI

Early Cinema Recollections

27

Early Films in the Age of Content; or, “Cinema of Attractions” Pursued by Digital Means

Paolo Cherchi Usai

A paradigm shift has taken place in the language of moving image preservation. By an ironic twist of archival rhetoric, “restoring” a film without further qualifications is now insufficient: the process must be called “digital restoration” in order to be taken seriously, even when no digital intervention is truly required.[1] Blunt as it is, this *coup d’état* in semantics (“digital” is used both as a noun and as adjective) is hardly surprising. Technology has also gradually reshaped our understanding of early cinema, turning it into an object of multiple reincarnations since the beginning of the twentieth century. Its “digital” avatar is the most recent in a long and convoluted saga encompassing a wide gamut of expressions: nostalgia and creativity; historicism (“early cinema” as opposed to “primitive,” its much despised synonym) and the utopia of timelessness; intriguing glimpses into the future (the installation works of contemporary artists inspired by pioneers of the moving image) and the reinvention of the past (in the attempts to “remake” early cinema with the relics of its own production tools).[2] The early films we see today through the so-called “new media” are the intangible footprints, in equal measure, of film culture, archival and curatorial practices, scholarship, and economics. Their multifaceted legacy deserves a closer look.

Our story begins in 1978. The retrospective of films from the 1900–6 period held in Brighton in the United Kingdom by the International

Federation of Film Archives (FIAF)[3] has long been regarded as a watershed in the study of early cinema, but we are mentioning it here for reasons other than the radical changes it was bound to provoke in the analysis of editing, cinematic narration, and the birth of the "cinema of attractions" theory.[4] What took the Brighton audience[5] by surprise was, first of all, the sheer number of titles screened for the occasion, 548 in all, mostly coming from the Library of Congress in Washington DC, the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek in Berlin, and especially from what was then called the National Film Archive in London, a branch of the British Film Institute.[6] It's not that archivists, curators, and academics didn't know about early cinema; what struck them was the fact that those rare incunabula of the moving image constituted a critical mass of primary evidence whose size, breadth, and diversity could no longer be ignored.[7]

Film scholars promptly received the message, as demonstrated by the outstanding body of literature produced in the following decades. According to a bibliography compiled in 1987 by Emmanuelle Toulet and expanded in 1995 by Elena Dagrada[8] under the auspices of Domitor, the international organization for the study of early cinema, 181 articles and essays were published between 1949 and 1978, an average of six publications per year; in the years 1979 to 1994 the number rose to 1,313 (an average of eighty-two publications per year), and the output has continued to grow since then.[9] Did the avalanche of films showcased in the Brighton marathon represent the majority of the titles known to exist (and that had been preserved) at the time within the FIAF community? The first cumulative lists of film prints made available to the public seem to support this assumption. A survey of the holdings of thirty-three archives, compiled by Ronald S. Magliozzi[10] at the Museum of Modern Art in New York on behalf of FIAF, listed 717 surviving fiction films made in the years 1900–6 (5,065 if we adopt a broader definition of "early cinema" encompassing the years 1894 to 1914), only 169 more than those shown in Brighton a decade earlier.

As of March 8, 2010, FIAF's *Treasures from the Film Archives* internet database[11] contained information on 19,422 titles made between 1894 and

1914, 4,556 of which belong to the 1900–6 time bracket.[12] It should be noted that this figure does not take into account collections outside the FIAF community and that only a minority, albeit substantial, of FIAF affiliates participate in the *Treasures* project or contribute regular updates. A conservative guess may add another 20 percent to the above figures, thus bringing the overall number of surviving prints of the 1894–1914 period to approximately 23,000 titles, or 30,000 individual copies.[13] Meanwhile, early nitrate prints are still being found and identified everywhere in the world. The quest for rediscovery of the early film heritage is not over quite yet.[14]

Unfortunately, not much else is known about the growth of international holdings of early films in the years before the Brighton conference and the publication of Magliozzi's book, other than the fact that on four occasions between 1962 and 1987 FIAF distributed among its members a classified registry (strictly for internal use) of film or film related material held by the Federation's affiliates.[15] Collection development is an unwritten chapter in the history of film archives. Little or no research has been conducted on the rate of film acquisitions (especially of early cinema) until the present day, and much remains to be done in order to understand its chronological pattern. Apart from the documentation on the well-known cases of D. W. Griffith's negatives of Biograph films acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in 1939[16] and the "rediscovery" that same year by Howard Lamarr Walls of the Paper Print Collection at the Library of Congress,[17] the best source on this matter is the three-volume catalogue (printed between 1951 and 1966) of the National Film Archive in London, where a total of about one thousand fiction films of the 1894–1914 period – 208 from the years 1900–6, the bulk of the Brighton program – are described in some detail.[18] The rest is a smattering of anecdotal information or isolated case studies, on topics ranging from the thirteen films by Méliès unveiled in 1929 for a gala event at the Salle Pleyel in Paris[19] to the later canonization of early film producers (Lumière, Edison) and the ongoing quest for the "first" films made in the countries where collecting institutions had the energy and determination to reconstruct the origins of their own cinematic heritage.

It’s not that early cinema wasn’t sought after by film archives on a regular basis: they had begun doing so – sometimes with brilliant achievements – since their inception in the 1930s. In this respect, a major change in the reception of early cinema had surreptitiously taken place at a curatorial level forty years before the Brighton conference, when the conservation of the film heritage as such had finally become a point of institutional concern. Even so, the new approach was influenced by two important biases. Early cinema was legitimized above all as a document of history rather than by its aesthetic value; more narrowly, it was worth saving mainly as a testimony of the individuals who got the business of cinema started in a given territory: the Skladanowsky brothers in Germany, Filoteo Alberini in Italy, Ole Olsen in Denmark, D. G. Phalke in India. Of course, this was a relevant endeavor only to a handful of film historians; from the point of view of film societies and their first audiences, feature films were largely – if not exclusively – the name of the game. A highly selective canon of early cinema had begun to emerge: a mixture of iconic samples from the “founding fathers” (again, Edison and Lumière), curiosities (Williamson’s *A Big Swallow* [1901]), landmarks (Edwin S. Porter’s *The Great Train Robbery* [1903]), and harbingers of things to come with the advent of “full-length” films, the stuff cinephiles and critics were admittedly interested in.[20]

Predictably enough, one of the most immediate effects of this attitude in the archival community was a tendency to acquire early films preferably when they complied with one of the above categories. Active preservation of these works was rare outside the United Kingdom, France, and the United States. Non-fiction titles were largely out of the picture, but even a major repository of early films such as the Filmarchiv Josef Joye, named after the Jesuit cleric who had collected them in Basel, Switzerland during the first decades of the twentieth century, had to wait a long time before being picked up by the radar of curatorial attention. The first known inventory of the collection is dated 1942. A second, more detailed catalogue was compiled under the direction of Stefan Bamberger between 1960 and 1963. Shortly afterwards, Italian film historian Davide Turconi examined the nitrate prints; faced with their precarious physical condition, and fearing that they would decompose before they could be copied, he excised pairs or

groups of frames in order to keep a record of the films.[21] Some titles of Italian origin and other films he deemed of special interest were brought to Italy and duplicated onto safety film stock. The Cinémathèque Suisse, renowned for its formidable international collection of feature films, had been a member of FIAF since 1948, but the Joye Collection was eventually deposited in 1977 at the National Film and Television Archive – about one thousand titles in total[22] – several years after its extraordinary value had been first acknowledged by film historians.

What happened to the Joye Collection at the NFA in the following years eloquently illustrates the fate of early cinema in the second phase of its archival life, and its main thrust can equally be applied to the vast majority of the films seen at the 1978 Brighton conference. Once acquired, the nitrate prints were copied onto black-and-white stock, despite the fact that most were colored through tinting, toning, with the stencil process, and in a few cases painted by hand. There were compelling reasons for this. First, the duplicating color stock in use at the time (such as Kodak's Eastmancolor triacetate film) was subject to accelerated fading; it was also unsuitable for film restoration work, as its hues were a poor approximation of the originals. Finally, black-and-white preservation negatives and prints had a much greater expected longevity, and could be stored at affordable levels of temperature and relative humidity. It should be remembered that the imperative in the 1970s was "nitrate won't wait": so much had to be preserved that it was deemed preferable to save as many films as possible with the standard techniques available at the time rather than aiming at greater but financially prohibitive accuracy in reproduction, while keeping the option of giving special treatment through color duplication to a few items deemed of greater visual appeal or historical importance (*Voyage à travers l'impossible* [*An Impossible Voyage*, 1904], *Three American Beauties* [1906], or some Pathé *féeries*), regardless of any limitation or imperfection in the preservation process.

Film preservation has considerably evolved in the twenty years following the Brighton retrospective, and no major archive of the twenty-first century would contemplate the option of reproducing a 1906 stencil-colored print in black and white. In 1978, color stock and processing was much more expensive than its black-and-white equivalent; hence the very strict

selection criteria adopted for the restoration of color in early films. Three decades later, common practice has taken the opposite direction, and it is not infrequent today to see early black-and-white films reproduced on color stock, while color intermediate negatives are still the best option for the photochemical rendition of hand-colored and stenciled nitrate prints.[23] (According to laboratory experts, digital intermediates can sometimes achieve even better results.)

In many respects, the evolution of specialized research on early cinema is intertwined with the history of film preservation itself: after half a century spent in identifying pre-sound cinema with the black-and-white image, scholars have become accustomed to think of color as an intrinsic feature of the early twentieth-century film heritage. Tinting and toning effects can now be suitably (albeit not perfectly) recreated through the Desmet method, a technique making it possible to obtain color positive prints from black-and-white negatives, still considered the most secure preservation elements on film. Curiously enough, this new opportunity is not always exploited to its full extent or in a logical fashion. Black-and-white stock is often chosen for the duplication of films uniformly tinted in light amber, as if this color did not deserve the viewer's attention. When it comes to black-and-white prints with tinted intertitles – title cards at Pathé and Gaumont were respectively colored in vermilion and green-blue, supplementary indicators of the films' corporate identity – the question of whether the prints should be copied onto black-and-white or color film stock is left to the archive's discretion, and its response is often surprisingly inconsistent:[24] intertitles are not deemed important enough to warrant an accurate color reproduction, but this is in fact the rationalization of a purely practical problem, in that creating mixed preservation elements with moving images reproduced in black and white and intertitles in color is more labor intensive.

Far from being a merely technical concern, the issue of color restoration highlights the mutual dependence between film preservation and research. When the Paper Print Collection at the Library of Congress became available through the 3,000 prints on 16 mm film stock created by Kemp R. Niver between 1953 and 1965,[25] the poor visual quality of the duplicates was a contributing factor in the enduring prevalence of narrative analysis

over attention to the pictorial aspects of early cinema: an incomplete perspective at best, oblivious to the possibility that sheer visual pleasure could also be a component of the "cinema of attractions" phenomenon. The example of D. W. Griffith's Biograph films – praised in their time for their photographic quality – is a useful illustration of this point: proud as he was of his Biograph camera and its Zeiss lens,[26] G. W. Bitzer would have been appalled at how his painstaking work was obliterated by Niver's reduction prints. And yet, without those prints – widely disseminated in private and public collections and extensively used in classrooms – we would have learned very little about D. W. Griffith's early work until now.[27] Painful as it may be, this reality can no longer be eluded by the optimistic but vaguely defined promise of a comprehensive digitization of all early film holdings. It is not just a matter of money or good will.

The emergence of digital technology has not only provided a new set of fascinating prospects for the reassessment of early cinema; it has also exposed the inadequacy of the quasi-exclusive relationship between the archivist and the scholar upon which the debate on early cinema has focused since the 1978 Brighton conference. This event was instrumental in defining the parameters of this dialectic and in highlighting its necessity, although it took thirty years before the terms of engagement between the two communities could find a coherent theoretical framework (and a widespread consensus on its practical application has yet to be found).[28] But necessary does not mean sufficient. A simplistic categorization of the term "archivist" has pigeonholed this professional figure to the comfortable but restricted role of an informed caretaker of the collections, who leaves to others the prerogative to interpret them at the moment of public exhibition, thus eclipsing the curatorial responsibilities which are an essential part of his or her identity.[29]

The specialized film festival has gradually become a proxy of the archive as the main forum for a dialogue between the archivist and the scholar; if early cinema hasn't been part of this trend to the same degree it is only because – in venues other than the Pordenone Silent Film Festival, Bologna's *Il Cinema Ritrovato* or Domitor symposia – pre-1914 titles are hardly the stuff special events are made of in public venues.[30] For

collecting institutions, the imperative of drawing large audiences relegates early cinema to a marginal position in film programming calendars; as a result, those who are interested in it are inevitably estranged from the theatrical experience and drawn to the individual consumption via DVD or the internet – a return to the solitary setup of the Kinetoscope by means of *force majeure*. Meanwhile, some scholars have become part of the archive's personnel; some curators have become active contributors to film studies, following a path inaugurated in the second half of the twentieth century by historians such as George C. Pratt (at George Eastman House) and Eileen Bowser (at the Museum of Modern Art). Together, the archivist-curator and the scholar form a compelling yet uneasy alliance, facilitated but not necessarily strengthened by the recourse to digital as a common ground for their respective interests in wider access to the collections.

When film archives began to welcome researchers beyond the ancient model of ad hoc or privileged access to the collections, the excitement about the new collaboration was sometimes tempered by misgivings around the respective priorities and principles. As an example, scholars may have discovered that viewing prints of early films were improperly edited and would volunteer to fix the problem,[31] sometimes neglecting two important caveats: first, that any correction to the editing of a reference print should be mindful of the reasons behind the suspected error; and second, that a presumably incorrect shot sequence is not necessarily the result of an oversight but of a deliberate decision made when the source print was produced or (in the case of release prints) assembled. A typical case in point is offered by several films in the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection, where shots were collated according to their tinting scheme, so that all the segments to be colored, say, in blue would be joined to each other before being treated in the corresponding dye bath. A number of titles in the Paper Print Collection have been duplicated from originals in such condition, and both the viewing prints and the master copy should be left as they are because they offer important clues on how distribution prints were made.[32] Instead of reassembling these prints, the archive should – in ideal circumstances – create a second preservation negative, reinstate the correct narrative sequence, and then produce a new viewing element without compromising the integrity of the historical record.

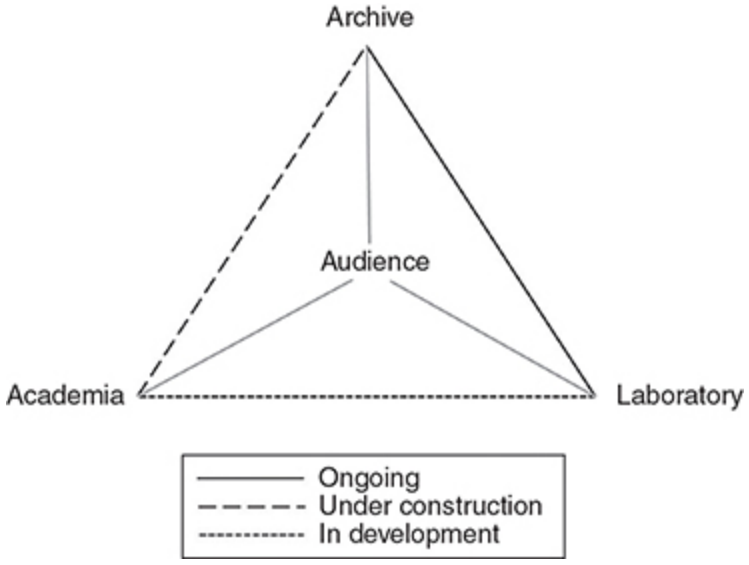
Instances such as the example above appear to indicate the persistence of a double bind: the archivist-curator relies on the scholar's experience, but is unable or instinctively reluctant to transmit the knowledge upon which his or her own expertise is based; the scholar may know more about the film in question but can't translate his or her findings in a way that benefits the archival work, thus perpetuating the notion that each party should stick to its own domain and not dare to venture into the other. To compound the problem, a third major variable is absent from the equation. Declaring that an early film was restored by a given archive or museum tells only one part of the story: the collecting institution may have decided to give it a full conservation treatment, and may have established how the preservation process should be implemented, but most of the real work – if not all – would have been done in a film laboratory, generally located outside the-cultural and administrative authority of the archive itself (a handful of collecting institutions have preservation facilities within their own premises; their capacity is often limited to black-and-white processing, as color work requires more sophisticated and expensive equipment).[33]

As a rule, the script goes more or less as follows: the archive determines that a film should undergo preservation work and contracts a film laboratory to do so on its behalf. After cleaning and repair, the laboratory will generally refrain from making any unilateral decision affecting the physical structure of the artifact. This rule is by no means inflexible: if, for example, a splice is too fragile to withstand the mechanical strain of the scanner or of the printing machine, a film technician may decide to open and rebuild the splice, or temporarily reinforce it with tape. A widespread practice (now strongly discouraged) in film laboratories involved the more drastic measure of cutting a frame from both ends and creating a brand new splice. What is lost in this case is not just the fraction of a second of screening time, but also a potentially useful piece of information, as we may never know whether the break is recent or not, the result of a deliberate editorial cut or print damage.

The personnel of the film laboratory are effectively in control of the preservation process until a digital file or an "answer print" – the first analog copy obtained through analog processing or from a digital intermediate – is made available in order to evaluate the results. The

definition of film preservation as an art and a science is more than a catchphrase: a good technician is often able to notice details or imperfections which may be invisible to curators. Contrary to the established view of the film laboratory as a service provider merely fulfilling the client's orders, its veterans have experience and foresight sometimes beyond the reach of the archive's staff (in many cases, the curators themselves are compelled to ask laboratory people what to do when faced with a difficult case); by all intents and purposes, the archive itself is a service provider to the taxpayer or other stakeholders, with the statutory mandate to act in the public interest by disseminating knowledge, but the laboratory is not bound to such obligations. Most of its practitioners do not feel an incentive to discuss what is relevant and what is not from a curatorial standpoint, as they assume that the curators have done all the required homework or that it is not their business to interfere.

Figure 27.1 The context of moving image preservation.



Nowhere in this scheme is there direct involvement by the film scholar, who has no other option than taking for granted that things are done properly and entrusting to the archive the entire responsibility for decisions on which the scholar could on some occasions, and quite legitimately, have his or her say. The profound flaw in this kind of reasoning is the belief that the temporary residence of a film print in the laboratory should not be the scholar's concern, in compliance with an inflexible (and, especially in the digital world, anachronistic) division of labor. According to this line of

thought, scholarship is concerned with ideas to be drawn from the experience of a document made ready for analysis, almost as if dealing with the technicalities of how it is preserved was beneath the scholar's attention (a prejudice reinforced by both the scholar's emotional distance from the practice of moving image preservation and the curator's protectiveness toward his or her own authority over the archive's operational policies).

Harsh as it may seem, this picture is not a caricature of reality. If the overall map of visual culture is always redefined by the migration of moving images across a variety of media, its *genius loci* is the technological environment where the intellectual choices underlying these transformations are made on behalf of the viewer. So far, the debate on how early cinema should be seen has been mainly held between the archive and the scholar; digital technology is now bringing them closer to other agents – the laboratory and the user of moving images in the internet sphere – as part of a holistic approach to film history, as exemplified in Figure 27.1.

As we have seen, the first building block in this cultural environment was laid out in 1978 at the Brighton conference, with scholars being officially invited to co-curate a film program organized by archivists. This part of the process is now well under way. The second step has occurred de facto over the last two decades with the increased involvement of curators in the activities of film laboratories for the sake of a better control over the outcome of their preservation work. But this is precisely the hidden face of film preservation: the name of the archive appears prominently – and justifiably so – on the main credits of the restored film,[34] while the organization technically responsible for it receives scant mention, if at all. To declare that a film available for viewing comes from a given archive is not enough; insofar as it wishes to make the preservation path fully transparent to the viewer, a collecting institution should also acknowledge that film restoration is also the product of an expertise which expresses itself in the technical facility where the duplication work has been carried out.

Until the first decade of the twenty-first century, early cinema has predominantly been preserved by photochemical means[35] with the inevitable modification of some physical, optical, and aesthetic attributes of the film – the same medium and format, a different look. Aside from

experiments such as Gaumont's Chronochrome – based on a panchromatic acetate film stock devised by Eastman Kodak upon request of Léon Gaumont in 1912[36] – early films were mainly on a cellulose nitrate base; they were shot on black-and-white orthochromatic stock, whose emulsion was sensitive to ultra-violet, violet, and blue light, partially sensitive to yellow and green, and "blind" to red surfaces.[37] The photographic emulsions of modern viewing prints – either in color or black and white – are of a completely different kind and sensitivity to light. Since 1951, their base was mostly triacetate film, whose transparency and light refraction are different from those of cellulose nitrate; its successor, polyester stock, became the norm – except for camera negatives in film productions, still on triacetate – around the end of the 1990s. In short, recent copies of early films are truly faithful to their sources only with respect to one fundamental principle of cinematic perception, a rapid sequence of still photographs projected individually. The goal of film preservation is to minimize the loss in translation determined by the use of different materials.

Other characteristics of original copies of early films disappear or become harder to detect after laboratory work: inscriptions on the edges of the prints;[38] the embossed markings sometimes applied in order to prevent illegal duplication by competitors at the time of the film's release; the shape of the splices, often revealing clues as to whether an early film was edited in the years of its commercial distribution or at a later time, or even by the archivists themselves (a case in point is the 1907 Nordisk film *Et Drama fra Riddertiden – For en Kvindes Skyld* [*A drama from the age of chivalry – For a woman's sake*], whose editing pattern has been the object of inconclusive speculation); the physical nature of color, applied with dyes no longer commercially available or often difficult if not impossible to recreate, as shown by Daniela Currò and Ulrich Ruedel;[39] not to mention the size and shape of the perforations, whose variations in time, and from a company to another, can help identify the maker of the film and the equipment used to produce it.

Between 2000 and 2005, digital technology slowly but forcefully entered the arena of early cinema with its promise to go far beyond its analog predecessor in changing the appearance of the reproduced image. The

enthusiasm with which this agenda was promoted was accompanied by the realization that it is easy to tell where digital restoration can start, but – in a striking counterpart to the clearly defined boundaries of the photochemical process – there are no theoretical limits to its application (time and money are not considered here). Digital correction makes it possible to address errors derived from inaccurate printing of the source material; among other things, it can eliminate vertical or horizontal flutter in the projected image. But the mantra of absolute image stability promoted by the digital industry can be applied so inflexibly as to make the cinematic image steadier than it actually should in the projection of a 35 mm or 16 mm print, thus depriving it of that "breathing" quality which is typical of photographic film (in a similar vein, digital operators are sometimes even asked to add a "film grain" effect to a glacially fixed picture in order to make it more palatable to the analog-born viewer).

In the case of early cinema, the dogma of stability often has questionable effects in that it obliterates a component of what audiences of the early twentieth century actually saw. A photographic film is never as unequivocally "steady" as a digital one. Furthermore, a slight vertical or horizontal jittering of the projected frames was not infrequent in films made before 1908, so much so that the Italian production company Itala Film promoted its films under the trademark logo of a female figure holding a beam of light on which the French word *fixité* ("stability") is inscribed.[40] It is up to the curator to decide the extent to which a reasonable middle ground may be established between historical accuracy and the pleasure of viewing: a relentlessly trembling image is certainly hard to watch, and it may well betray the intentions of the filmmaker; but the complete opposite of a rock steady picture is as "false" as the instability caused by a faulty printing job.

The excess of zeal in the digital treatment of early cinema can manifest itself in other ways, starting with the arbitrary attribution of tints – as in many commercial DVDs – and the artificial improvement of density and contrast in order to make the film more palatable to modern audiences accustomed to the glossy look of mainstream commercial productions.[41] When used without restraint, digital tools can create entirely fictional entities: in 2007 the FIAF showcased the would-be discovery of Georges

Méliès's 3D films made by juxtaposing images derived from two negatives of the same film, shot at slightly different camera angles and originally intended for the domestic and foreign markets.[42] Digital projection is also a potential liability. A crucial feature of silent cinema is its flexibility in relation to projection speed: exhibitors of the early twentieth century had the option of altering the rate at which films were projected, and while 16 frames per second was common, there were frequent variations from the norm. Once screened theatrically in digital formats, the projection speed of an early film cannot be easily modified after curatorial judgment. This is due to the digital projection software available at present, designed in accordance with the technical standards for theatrical exhibition established in 2005 – with the support of the Hollywood majors – by Digital Cinema Initiatives (DCI), another missed chance for the archival and scholarly communities to make their voices heard.[43]

An important distinction should be made at this point between the purely digital duplication or exhibition of an early film and the use of digital devices for restoration purposes. A typical "hybrid" preservation pattern involving both photochemical and digital techniques proceeds in the following manner: the nitrate print is repaired and cleaned, exactly as in the photochemical process; the copy is then passed through a digital scanner – also equipped with a "wet gate" device, as in the optical printer – at various possible resolutions, currently ranging from about 2 K to 6 K (these abbreviations for picture resolution, indicated in thousands of pixels lengthwise across the screen, refer to the digital image but have been misleadingly applied to photochemical film);[44] images are stabilized, de-flickered and cleaned if and as required; and the corrected files are then transferred back onto a 35 mm preservation negative. It is also possible to bypass the transfer to film altogether, leaving the digital file as is and using it for transfer onto a variety of viewing formats, in which case the preservation process may or may not be considered complete.

There is a crucial difference between the "digitization" of an early film (mainly for public access; the digitized images are not put back onto 35 mm stock) and its "digital preservation," where the end result of the restoration process is either a photochemical element or a storage system for

uncompressed or “lossless” digital data. At the time of this writing, the latter is not considered a form of long-term preservation for analog-born moving images. Unfortunately, this option is becoming so widespread that in a not too distant future an early film distributed in digital form may no longer be available in a projectable analog print (except in the unlikely event that someone decides to transfer it again onto film at a later stage). The digitally reproduced film may therefore become the only accessible version of something we will never have an opportunity to experience in its original incarnation, thus compromising our chances of seeing early cinema in a form closer to what it was: a succession of still photographic images projected by a mechanical apparatus.[45]

True, this question is pertinent to all photochemical film, regardless of its era. With early cinema, however, the issue of digitization has special implications at the financial level. If analog film preservation is a costly affair (as of March 2010, the average price for the photochemical process on a nitrate positive print was US$3.37 per foot of film), proper digital restoration is even more onerous.[46] Modest revenue could be generated only if digital producers were permitted to work on film titles which had already been preserved, as was the case in 2008 with a five-disc set of films by Georges Méliès.[47] A sad recurrence in this and other similar commercial DVD products – often reflected in their website equivalents – is the absence of any indication of the archival provenance of individual titles.[48] The film print, with all its specificities and characteristics, has become “a film”; that is, the actual print source and the name of the collecting institution responsible for its preservation appear to be irrelevant. Apart from its ethical considerations, this practice highlights a chronic indifference toward the “internal history” of the print: where it was found, how it had been used and by whom, which collection policy prompted its acquisition, and how it was preserved.

This brings us to the elusive frontier of early cinema as the object of public access through digital media. Early films, like silent films of later years, are the all too frequent casualties of various forms of mistreatment, both in the classroom and on the internet: dreadful picture quality, wrong projection speed, cropped image, inappropriate sound accompaniment. At

the present time, it is impossible to determine with any degree of accuracy how many films from the early period are available in digital form. A rough guess based on available data suggests that approximately 5 percent of the extant titles made from 1894 to 1906 can be seen in formats other than film (many of them are posted on the internet by private and public organizations such as the Internet Archive and EYE Film Instituut Nederland).[49] The ratio may well change in the near future, but for the time being it is prudent to say that the vast majority of the early films held by major archival institutions can still be seen only in the form of photochemical prints (the percentage of titles still awaiting proper preservation in any form – analog or digital – is undetermined, but it probably accounts for about 10 percent of the total).

What can be inferred from the above estimates is a two-layered message: early cinema has never been accessible as widely as it is today thanks to DVD and the internet, but the body of work at the disposal of viewers who don't have direct access to film prints is much smaller than the total number of extant titles, thus emphasizing the importance of the public events (festivals, conferences, symposia) where photochemical prints are being projected for specialized audiences.[50] Figuring out the possible reasons for this does not require a great leap of imagination: if the market for the distribution of silent cinema is extremely limited (the average run of a VHS tape of a silent feature was in the neighborhood of 2,500 copies), early films have an even smaller audience, due to the predominance of the feature-length format from the standpoint of the non-specialized viewer. Méliès is probably the only profitable name in the early cinema marketplace, and even in his case the term "profitable" needs to be qualified as a phenomenon of small magnitude.[51] The other high-profile DVD releases are generally "niche" projects, the equivalent of a prestige marketing tool for a few major companies.

Moreover, the early films one can see in DVD format are in most cases transfers from positive prints with little or no additional digital restoration work. The main difference is in the packaging and in the added value of curatorial input and documentation, such as the *Treasures from the American Film Archives* series published between 2000 and 2011 by the

National Film Preservation Foundation[52] and in the meticulous reconstruction of *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (Charles Tait, 1906) by the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia;[53] these, however, represent exceptions rather than the norm: several early films by D. W. Griffith are available in second-rate reproductions from Kemp Niver's already mediocre 16 mm duplicates of the Paper Print Collection at the Library of Congress. The fact that early cinema is mostly in the public domain appears to be a mixed blessing, in that while on the one hand its dissemination is not constrained by law, on the other hand, for the very same reason, it offers little or no incentive to commercial entrepreneurs.

For non-profit archives with nitrate (and safety) film collections it is a wholly different matter: because of their statutory role of custodians of early cinema, institutions such as George Eastman House, the Museum of Modern Art, the Archives françaises du film in Bois d'Arcy, and the British Film Institute have rightfully invested considerable resources in the restoration of films of negligible monetary appeal; making them available on the internet at a reasonable cost – assuming these and other archives had the technical infrastructure to do so – has no concrete prospect of a meaningful financial return. In some cases, this practice would be likely to alienate that part of the archives' constituency supporting their mission as non-profit organizations. In others, it would eventually make the creation of 35 mm preservation negatives and viewing prints redundant, thus endangering the films themselves and depriving specialized film festivals of a vital source of exhibition material (assuming they were committed to the recreation of the analog film experience; if they chose to follow the digital path instead, it is unclear why audiences would spend time and money to see early films already available for home viewing).

Should collecting institutions worry about film festivals? Perhaps not. Should they be concerned about their own standing as "service providers?" In all likelihood, yes. Here lies a telling contradiction between the goals and the means: once available on a website, a film in the public domain is no longer "special" as it can be easily and indefinitely reproduced, thus obliterating the element of "uniqueness" of the material made available for screening and effectively depriving the archive of its declared *raison d'être* – a problematic and increasingly unpopular conception of the film

collecting institution, but a concept which so far has not been replaced by an alternative and successful term of reference. Initiatives such as the Internet Archive in the United States and Beelden voor de toekomst ("Images for the Future") in the Netherlands[54] are questioning the very existence of the traditional model of film archiving in the name of more democratized access to film heritage. In light of this, early cinema may become one of the battlegrounds leading to the possible end of the film museum framework as we have known it in the twentieth century.

This is perhaps the most significant point of contact between early cinema and the still largely uncharted territory of its mass migration to digital. Notwithstanding the problems with projection software, digital technology is not at all incompatible with the theatrical experience of moving images produced one hundred years before its own birth; however, its proclaimed "interactive" aptitude, matched with the brevity typical of early films, encourages the viewer not only to accept the DVD or the internet as a vehicle for discovery subsidiary to the projection room, but to treat them as desirable and embrace their *modus operandi*. Digital makes a virtue out of necessity: because it is so hard to see early films in a cinema, the internet offers what the early cinema spectator had at the turn of the nineteenth century – a fulfillment of the desire for diversity and scope in the multiple offers provided, together with the belief that it is up to the viewer to opt for a repetition of the same experience or a constant change in the "program." The internet user becomes a producer (with YouTube as a marketing outlet), a distributor (with BitTorrent), an exhibitor; and – if the correct software is available – also a projectionist who can run the film faster or slower on the computer, at will.

For this kind of viewer, the appearance of the moving image in the form of a semi-transparent carrier with a photographic emulsion attached to it, or a myriad of pixels displayed on a digital screen, makes no difference whatsoever.[55] Whether the images are produced by a flow of sixteen still photographs per second, or from a stream of dots moving at a much higher speed, is of no consequence to the digital spectator; even the alleged shortcomings of the digital image in conveying the psychological senses of depth or duration don't seem to matter, as duration itself doesn't matter, either, in a mode of representation based on the instant as the unity of

measure of visual fulfillment.[56] In its plain endorsement of the *forma brevis*, YouTube takes the same approach to the moving image promoted by films in the early twentieth century: the "cinema of attractions" pursued by other means. As for the supposed solitude of the viewer at home, it may well be argued that early cinema seen on a computer is no different from other forms of collective experience, with the global community of the internet replacing the ritual of a crowd in the temple of photochemical projection.

Moving image archives of the pre-digital era have hinted at two possible types of response to this challenge. The first, a pay-per-view service for access to its collections, clashes with the staggering amount of money required in order to create a functional digital infrastructure. The other option for curatorial commentary on the images being displayed – in the form of auxiliary images, voice-over recordings, and research material – is undermined by the limited resources available to most archives. They could only provide a minuscule fraction of what would be necessary to give a comprehensive view of their overall collections. The curatorial strategy of presenting early cinema with a compelling packet of information and documentation is the film scholar's ultimate dream (often reflected in the reductionist "philological" orientation typical of the "critical editions" of films on DVD,[57] geared toward editing and footage count rather than qualitative factors such as image quality – chiaroscuro, *sfumato* – or chromatic values), but it can be applied only on a limited basis in a cultural environment where mass accessibility to "content" (defined here as the natural and artificial entities, events, or objects appearing in a moving image) has become the password to popular and political support.[58]

The cleavage between digital "content" and creative work is particularly acute in the case of early cinema: in this context, its surviving corpus may be incorporated into four broad categories. Some films exist only in the form of nitrate prints, unmediated proofs of the art, culture, and technology of cinema between the 1890s and the early twentieth century. Few individuals are interested in seeing them as artifacts, even fewer institutions are ready and willing to make them accessible to scholars. Others have been "preserved," that is, duplicated in the same medium and format in which

they had originally been made; this is still the bulk of what is visible today, albeit by a qualified elite of viewers. The third category includes the films that have migrated to a digital medium carried by a physical object, such as a DVD. Finally, there is early cinema as part of the exploding galaxy of internet "content" available to all, mostly a pale reflection (so far) of the original work.

Once resurrected in digital form, early cinema gains in visibility while renouncing its identity as an artwork: the physical traits of the object it derives from, the history of how the object was made, seen and altered through the years. The digital life of early cinema is in itself a document of its transformation into a deceptively neutral and highly flexible conglomerate of visual information, subject to endless manipulation and to an eventual reincarnation into a wholly new work, as demonstrated by the experimental films, videos, websites, and installations making use of twentieth-century imagery for creative purposes. In a telling symptom of the enduring hierarchy among visual arts, early cinema has also become "content" in the museums and art galleries where, on monitors adjacent to artworks, moving images are displayed as ancillary samples of a given theme or style, with paintings hanging on the wall and a flat screen nearby showing reproductions of film clips – cinema as "information," a commodity for the fine arts public.[59]

Nothing is inherently wrong with presenting early cinema outside its historical or technological background, nor should one take a moralistic stance in support of an "authenticity" of a visual experience which is impossible to recreate and arguably existed only in the minds of individual viewers of the time. After all, generations of art historians have trained for many decades by looking at low-quality photographic reproductions, and yet never had the impression that their ultimate goals and objectives were being betrayed by doing so. Invaluable scholarly knowledge is generated by the study of early films in digital form,[60] insofar as it is recognized that the necessity of their migration from an analog source does not make it acceptable to treat its photochemical past as irrelevant to the target of the intended inquiry.

The research appendices to the scholarly multi-volume series "Screen Decades"[61] provide information on electronic versions of the films analyzed in each volume, with no mention of the respective archival sources (where the film is preserved, where it can be seen as a film, which print had been discussed in the book).[62] The editorial policy behind this decision shows how the principle of facilitated access to early film "content" has an innate tendency to evade questions related to provenance (where the "content" comes from), identity (what makes a given print or version different from the others, the very basis for the "critical edition" approach to films on DVD), and reception (how interpretation may have been affected by reproduction) of the moving image. This has nothing to do with championing analog projection against its digital ersatz; it has to do instead with declaring that *this* print of an early film, not a randomly chosen one, has been used for a critical or theoretical analysis: not *the* Pathé 1907 *Passion*, but – for instance – the Swedish Film Archive's copy of that film.

At the other end of the spectrum there is early cinema as a trace, the archaeological site of past cultures and practices of an almost defunct mode of expression, the object of scrutiny for a small group of specialists.[63] Nitrate prints, acetate and polyester 35 mm copies, smaller film formats, videotapes, laserdiscs, DVDs, Blu-ray, digital scans, the internet: if we were to adopt a fashionable phrase of the early twenty-first century, we could describe this gamut of options as a continuous line between the extremes of "low-resolution" vs. "high-resolution" historiography: at one end, an intellectual inquiry comparable to the study of a manuscript on parchment; at the other, the transcription of its text (the equivalent of Kemp Niver's copies from the Paper Print Collection); in between, an accurate digital facsimile of the parchment itself. For the average viewer, the digital reproduction of an early film looks more appealing than the examination of its source: not because it is a useful research tool *per se*, but simply because it does not require the physical presence of the researcher in the archive. From the viewpoint of the collecting institution, the hegemony of such an approach is encouraged by the convenience of "digitizing" early cinema without preserving it in analog form.[64]

“Digital content” is not the first episode in the ongoing metamorphosis of early cinema, and it won’t be the last. But its repercussions are much wider and more intricate than the previous ones; they cannot be handled by the curator alone, nor can they be managed by scholars and preservation experts in mutual isolation. All of them have something at stake, and each should be able to rely upon the experience and the vision of the others; hence the value of the three-way dialogue suggested here. Early cinema began its mutation into other entities long before digital technology appeared on the horizon, first as a monochrome imitation of what it used to be, then as the theater of more radical transformations which shifted its material evidence toward the abstraction of digital bits. Archivists, historians, and technicians have all witnessed this from their own vantage point; their individual trajectories intersect and complement each other. At the center of the landscape drawn by the three merging pictures there is the viewing community at large, with its own perceptions and its own participation in the incessant molding of early moving images to the needs of the present. In the digital world, spectators are as close to being the creators as they were at the beginnings of cinema.

Such coincidence of behavior is what makes digital early cinema so compelling as a case study in visual entropy. Its mode of consumption, and the similarities it suggests with the practice of early film exhibition, are based on the principle of an incessant reshuffling of possibilities: the free juxtaposition of moving images, the addition or subtraction of some of their components, the creation of new “films” achieved through the recycling of older productions, as in the countless film versions of the Passion play edited and presented by entrepreneurs at a time when the integrity of a film was not perceived as a matter of significance. There is a lively debate among specialists of magic lanterns on whether it would be preferable or appropriate to show original slides despite their extreme vulnerability, in lieu of accurate reproductions achieved by digital means;[65] such a dilemma does not even present itself in the case of early cinema, where the “original” prints are too fragile to be screened[66] and 35 mm projection apparatus is becoming obsolete as a vehicle for public exhibition outside film museums and archives. In this sense, early cinema is an ideal laboratory for the study of digital media: the whimsical addition of tinting to a black-and-white

image for a DVD, the readjustment of an editing pattern based on subjective judgment, even the reinvention of Méliès as a father of stereoscopic cinema constitute the fulfillment of what early film has always been, a dazzling form of *ars combinatoria* nurturing itself upon the ruins of our visual past.

Notes

1 The inclusion of the term “digital” presupposes the alternative of a photochemical process – common among film archives and museums until the 2010s – in preserving an “analog” print. At the time of this writing, motion picture film is still being manufactured (in an increasingly limited range of stocks) by five major companies: Kodak (United States), Fuji (Japan), Orwo (Germany), Lucky Film (China), and by the European multinational Agfa-Gevaert. The eventual disappearance of 35mm film stock should result in the resumption of the term “restoration” with no added words, at least not until another post-digital technology emerges.

2 Since 1999, a group of film teachers and students at the University of Wisconsin have created a number of films on 35 mm with a 1907 camera, presented in various film festivals and conferences under the fictional brand “Wisconsin Biograph.” See also *Lumière et compagnie* (1995), a compilation of short films created with a Lumière camera by forty international directors.

3 Two volumes were published for the occasion by Roger Holman and André Gaudreault, eds., *Cinema 1900–1906: An Analytical Study*, 2 vols. (Brussels: FIAF, 1982).

4 For a summary of the issues surrounding the “cinema of attractions” theory, see Stephen Bottomore, “The First Twenty Years of French Cinema (Paris, 4–6 November 1993) and the Musser-Gunning Debate,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 14, no. 2 (1994): 215–18.

5 It was, by any measure, a small audience: Holman and Gaudreault, *Cinema 1900–1906*, vol. 1, 363–6, list 115 delegates from FIAF archives and academic institutions.

6 The eighteen archives participating in the 1978 Brighton program provided the following number of prints: National Film Archive, London, 239; Library of Congress, Washington, 105; Stiftung Deutsche

Kinemathek, Berlin, 71; Services des Archives du Film, Bois d'Arcy, 34; Museum of Modern Art, New York, 21; Filmoteca de la UNAM, Mexico City, 16; Gosfilmofond, Moscow, 14; Filmoteka Polska, Warsaw, 13; Ceskoslovenský Filmový Ústav, Prague, 10; Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique, Brussels, 10; Magyar Filmtudomanyi Intézet és Filmarchivum, Budapest, 6; Bulgarska Nacionalna Filmoteka, Sofia, 3; Det Danske Filmmuseum, Copenhagen, 3; George Eastman House, Rochester, 3; Deutsches Institut für Filmkunde, Wiesbaden, 2; Canadian Film Archives, Ottawa, 1; Österreichisches Filmmuseum, Vienna, 1. The archival sources of six titles are not known (and no title is specifically attributed to the Israel Film Archive, the eighteenth institution credited for taking part in the project). A total of 558 prints were received for the Brighton retrospective (10 of the 548 titles listed in Holman and Gaudreault, *Cinema 1900–1906* were represented by prints from two different archives).

7 It should be added, however, that the Brighton retrospective gave impetus to an otherwise neglected area of film restoration: the National Film Archive asked every participating institution to send all the films they had from the period 1900–6 in return for undertaking immediate preservation and giving the archives concerned a new negative and a print. "No archive was interested in this period [of film history] … this was the only way to get their attention" (David Francis to the author, March 10, 2010).

8 Elena Dagrada, ed., *Bibliographie internationale du cinéma des premiers temps*/*International Bibliography on Early Cinema*, 2nd ed. (n.p.: Domitor, 1995).

9 Daniela Currò and Ulrich Ruedel (Haghefilm Foundation, Amsterdam) have researched the statistical information on the printed sources used in this essay.

10 Ronald S. Magliozzi, ed., *Treasures from the Film Archives: A Catalog of Short Silent Fiction Films Held by FIAF Archives* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1988).

11 The FIAF database of silent film holdings is currently available by subscription in two internet versions: Ovid (http://ovidsp.ovid.com) and

Chadwick-Healey/ProQuest (http://fiaf.chadwyck.com/marketing/index.jsp).

12 This figure represents a 666 percent increase from 1978 and a 529 percent increase from 1988. For the record, the extant films made from the beginnings of cinema to 1906 mentioned in *Treasures* are 6,653; several titles in this inventory – as well as in Magliozzi's – are often held by more than one archival institution.

13 The largest number of extant nitrate prints for an early film appears to be for Pathé's *Vie et Passion de N. S. Jésus Christ* (*Life and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1907), with approximately forty copies surviving worldwide.

14 As of August 10, 2010 a total of 49,433 silent films were included in FIAF's *Treasures* database.

15 The four FIAF volumes offer the following results: 1,977 titles recorded in 1962; 3,953 titles in 1965; 4,264 titles in 1977; 5,899 titles in 1987.

16 Iris Barry, "Why Wait for Posterity?," *Hollywood Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (January 1946): 131–7.

17 The paper prints at the Library of Congress were actually never "lost"; see, for instance, Charles "Buckey" Grimm, "A Paper Print Pre-History," *Film History* 11, no. 2 (1999): 204–16.

18 The combined number of fiction, non-fiction, and news films in the three BFI volumes is close to 2,000 items for the 1900–6 period and 2,500 items for the years 1894 to 1914.

19 Roland Cosandey, "Georges Méliès as *L'inescamotable escamoteur*: A Study in Recognition," in *A Trip to the Movies: Georges Méliès, Filmmaker and Magician*, ed. Paolo Cherchi Usai (Pordenone: Le Giornate del Cinema Muto/Edizioni Biblioteca dell'Immagine; Rochester: George Eastman House, 1991), 56–111; see especially note 21, 101–4.

20 The only films from 1894–1906 mentioned in the "best of" polls held every ten years by *Sight and Sound* from 1952 to 2002 are *Le voyage dans la lune* (*A Trip to the Moon*, 1902), *Le mélomane* (*The Melomaniac*, 1903), and *Voyage à travers l'impossible* (*An Impossible Voyage*, 1904) by Georges Méliès, and *The Great Train Robbery* by Edwin S. Porter (1903). A few additional titles made between 1907 and 1914 have earned a

mention: *L'assassinat du Duc de Guise* (*The Assassination of the Duke of Guise*, André Calmettes and Charles Le Bargy, 1908) and *The Old Actor* (D. W. Griffith, 1912) in 1952; *Ingeborg Holm* (Victor Sjöström, 1913) in 1982 and 2002; *The Lonedale Operator* (D. W. Griffith, 1911), *Fantômas* (Louis Feuillade, 1913), and *Traffic in Souls* (George Loane Tucker, 1913) in 1992; and *The Land Beyond the Sunset* (Harold Shaw, 1912) in 2002.

21 For information on Davide Turconi's initiative, see David Robinson, "Davide Turconi and the Joye Collection," in *24th Pordenone Silent Film Festival Catalog* (Sacile: Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, 2005), 32–3; Roland Cosandey, ed., *Welcome Home, Joye! Film um 1910: Aus der Sammlung Joseph Joye* (Basel: Stroemfel, 1993); Joshua Yumibe, "From Switzerland to Italy and All Around the World: The Joseph Joye and Davide Turconi Collections," in *Early Cinema and the "National"*, eds. Richard Abel, Giorgio Bertellini, and Rob King (Eastley: John Libbey, 2008), 321–31. The Turconi Collection – over twenty thousand film clips – can now be consulted in its entirety on the internet (www.progettoturconi.it).

22 The current estimate of 1,158 prints as the exact size of the holdings is subject to revision.

23 In the late 1990s George Eastman House made an experiment by preserving an 1899 hand-colored film, Georges Méliès's *La danse du feu* (*The Pillar of Fire*) with three different kinds of film stock in order to assess the difference in the chromatic values and life expectancy of the viewing prints, a rare instance of a restoration project conceived as a time capsule in the art and science of film restoration.

24 Most film archives and museums describe prints with tinted intertitles as "black and white" material, on the basis of an implicitly endorsed hegemony of the moving image over the written word in the curatorial assessment of the film artifact.

25 Kemp R. Niver, "From Film to Paper to Film," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 21, no. 4 (1964): 248–64.

26 This is the reason why Bitzer was initially hesitant to leave Biograph when D. W. Griffith left the company; see Richard Schickel, *D. W. Griffith: An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 204.

27 The Library of Congress has announced that it “has been producing vastly superior new 35 mm copies from the original paper rolls for several years, and plans to continue until the entire collection has been re-photographed.” See “Early Motion Pictures Free of Copyright Restrictions at the Library of Congress: The Paper Print Collection,” Library of Congress, published April 15, 2009, http://www.loc.gov/rr/mopic/earlymps.html.

28 On this point, see Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 15.

29 For a more nuanced view of the archivist as the interpreter of history, see Arlette Farge, *Le goût de l’archive* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), especially 114–22.

30 One additional minor statistic: 24 percent of the silent films shown in Pordenone from its beginnings in 1982 to 2008 are from the 1889–1906 period; the percentage is 10 percent for *Il Cinema Ritrovato* from 1986 to 2008 (the percentages of films made in 1889–1914 are 54 percent for Pordenone and 36 percent for Bologna).

31 An example of this issue is persuasively described by Nicolas Dulac and André Gaudreault, “Cross-cutting in the Face of History: The Case of *Attack on a China Mission*,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 7, no. 1 (2009): 1–18.

32 Patrick Loughney has provided a thorough analysis of the physical nature and archival significance of the Library of Congress paper prints in *A Descriptive Analysis of the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection and Related Copyright Materials* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1988).

33 At the time of this writing (March 2010), an interesting exception is represented by EYE Film Instituut Nederland (formerly known as Nederlands Filmmuseum), whose preservation offices are currently located in the same building as Haghefilm Conservation BV in Amsterdam, the commercial laboratory where most of EYE’s restoration work is done. The Haghefilm/EYE collaboration is a unique example of synergy between curatorial and technical expertise in the field of film restoration.

34 Archival credits on DVD and internet versions are another matter. Title cards referring to the identity of the archival sources of restored early

films are often deleted in their electronic versions.

35 Mark-Paul Meyer and Paul Read, *Restoration of Motion Picture Film* (Newton: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2000), 63–4.

36 *Filmparlants (Talking Pictures) and Chronochrome Gaumont* (Flushing: Gaumont Company, 1913).

37 *Motion Picture Laboratory Practice and Characteristics of Eastman Motion Picture Films* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Company, 1936), 63.

38 For a detailed analysis of edge markings in early films see Harold Brown, *Physical Characteristics of Early Films as Aids for Identification* (Brussels: FIAF, 1990).

39 Daniela Currò and Ulrich Ruedel, "The Restoration of Color," in *Color and the Moving Image*, eds. Simon Brown, Sarah Street, and Liz Watkins (London: Routledge, 2012).

40 The logo of Itala Film is reproduced on the cover of Paolo Bertetto and Gianni Rondolino, eds., *Cabiria e il suo tempo* (Milan: Il Castoro; Turin: Museo Nazionale del Cinema, 1998).

41 For a discussion of methodologies and case studies in the digital distribution of archival films, see Martin Loiperdinger, ed., *Celluloid Goes Digital: Historical-Critical Editions of Films on DVD and the Internet. Proceedings of the First International Trier Conference on Film and New Media, October 2002* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2003).

42 The program, held in Tokyo on April 7–8, 2007 by the Münchner - Filmmuseum,announced "the very first (and even to film experts totally unknown [*sic*]) 3D films by Méliès and Lumière as examples of the traditional 2-strip system with two projectors" (*FIAF 2007 Tokyo Conference Program Guide*, 20). Anne-Marie Quévrain and Jacques Malthête ("Nouvelle surprise, nouvel avatar: des films de Méliès en 3D!," *Cinémathèque Méliès* 28 [March 2010]: 10–11) attribute the presentation to the French commercial archive Lobster Films.

43 *Digital Cinema System Specification*, Digital Cinema Initiative, Version 1.0, July 20, 2005 (hard copy; internet version no longer accessible); Version 1.1, April 12, 2007 (hard copy; internet version no longer accessible); Version 1.2, March 7, 2008, http://www.dcimovies.com/DCIDigitalCinemaSystemSpecv1_2.pdf (accessed March 10, 2011). Blu-ray, an optical storage disc device

launched in 2006 as an improvement over the traditional DVD format, was incompatible with images recorded at less than 24 frames per second.

44 The fallacies of applying the term “pixel” to the cinematic image are thoroughly examined by David Rodowick in *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 119–20.

45 For a discussion of this topic, see Paolo Cherchi Usai, David Francis, Alexander Horwath, and Michael Loebenstein, eds., *Film Curatorship: Archives, Museums, and the Digital Marketplace* (Vienna: Synema – Gesellschaft für Film und Medien/Österreichisches Filmmuseum, 2008).

46 The cost of a digital correction job is normally calculated by the time necessary to digitally manipulate a single frame of film. According to Paulo Fonseca, a technician with experience in the digital restoration of films from the silent era, the digital cleaning of one minute of 35 mm film takes an average of one week of full-time work (an amount of time which may vary widely, depending on the degree of refinement required by the project). As of March 2010, the average cost for digital scanning and correction of a foot of nitrate positive film was US$155, that is, US$9,300 per minute in a film to be screened at 16 frames per second, meaning that a ten-minute early film would cost US$93,000 to be digitally preserved and another US$2,000 to be processed and printed, with an overall charge of US$95,000 for the fully preserved film. The price tag would be dramatically lower for minimal or no correction to the digital file after scanning.

47 *Georges Méliès: First Wizard of the Cinema* (Los Angeles: Flicker Alley, 2008), DVD. A supplementary disc was published by the same company in 2010 as *Georges Méliès: Encore. New Discoveries, 1896–1911*.

48 The lack of mention of the specific archival sources in for-profit DVD compilations is sometimes compensated by a generic acknowledgment of the archives and museums involved in the project.

49 As of February 21, 2010, the Internet Archive (http://www.archive.org/details/movies) contained seventy-five titles from the beginnings of cinema to 1906. See also www.eyefilm.nl for EYE’s digital access project on Dutch film heritage, Film in Nederland.

50 For a discussion of the ratio between surviving films and titles available in digital form, see Kristin Thompson, “The Celestial Multiplex,” in Cherchi Usai *et al.*, *Film Curatorship*, 216–21.

51 An outline of the issues surrounding the distribution of archival films on DVD is included in Martin Koerber, “Inside and Outside the Bubble: Archival Standards and the DVD Market,” in Loiperdinger, *Celluloid Goes Digital*, 34–7.

52 What follows is a chronological breakdown of the National Film Preservation Foundation’s DVD sets which include titles from the early years of cinema: *Treasures from American Film Archives, 50 Preserved Films* (2000); *More Treasures from American Film Archives, 1894–1931* (2004); *Treasures from American Film Archives – Encore Edition* (2005) (reissue, with minor revisions to the booklet of the 2000 set); *Treasures III: Social Issues in American Film, 1900–1934* (2007); and *Treasures V: The West, 1898–1938* (2011).

53 *The Story of the Kelly Gang* – arguably the first feature-length film ever made – survives only in the form of scattered fragments; a DVD set on the film was distributed in 2006 (Collingwood, Madman Entertainment, cat. no. MMA2567).

54 *Images for the Future*, Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, EYE Film Institute Netherlands, National Archive and Netherlands Knowledgeland Foundation, www.imagesforthefuture.org (accessed November 2, 2010).

55 A compelling articulation of this point can be found in Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, 52.

56 Babette Mangolte, “Afterword: A Matter of Time. Analog versus Digital, the Perennial Question of Shifting Technology and Its Implications for an Experimental Filmmaker’s Odyssey,” in *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida*, eds. Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 263.

57 For an example of the assimilation of the moving image to the written word, see Kurt Gärtner, “Philological Requirements for Digital Historical Critical Text Editions and Their Applications to Critical Editions of Films,” in Loiperdinger, *Celluloid Goes Digital*, 49–54.

58 The emphasis on “audiovisual content” characterizes much of the research conducted in this area. The financial and strategic aspects of digital “delivery” of archival holdings are discussed in a report by David Pierce, *Expanding Access to Moving Image and Audio Collections in the Digital Age – Strategy and Recommendations* (2007), prepared for the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division at the Library of Congress and for the UCLA Film and Television Archive.

59 “[I]f the DVD in general can function in three ways: as a presentational device, a tool and a data carrier, I would tend to view its specific value as the latter.” Patrick Vonderau, “DVD – Study Center of Today?,” in Loiperdinger, *Celluloid Goes Digital*, 127.

60 An example of this is offered by Yuri Tsivian’s Cinemetrics project, based on a highly sophisticated statistical analysis of shot duration. See http://www.cinemetrics.lv/news.php (accessed March 11, 2010).

61 André Gaudreault, ed., *American Cinema 1890–1909*; Charlie Keil and Ben Singer, eds., *American Cinema of the 1910s*, both part of the “Screen Decades” series (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009).

62 Two editors of the “Screen Decades” series have provided useful insights on this matter. Charlie Keil to the author, March 4, 2010: “The exclusion of archival information was a contentious decision.… I do recall that an argument stressing that the book was to be used by students and that they would not have access to archives was put forward.… I did not agree with this decision, but was out-voted.” Ben Singer to the author, March 4, 2010: “I think it probably was the general editors who balked at providing specifics regarding archival holdings.”

63 So small that preservation specialists in the other arts do not recognize cinema as part of their intellectual sphere, as demonstrated by the absence of any study on the moving image in Nicholas Stanley Price, M. Kirby Talley Jr., and Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro, eds., *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage* (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1996); see also Paolo Cherchi Usai, “The Conservation of Moving Images,” *Studies in Conservation* 55 (2010): 1–8.

64 Digital “preservation” (as opposed to “restoration”) of moving images is a matter of heated controversy, compounded by the widespread belief

among non-specialists that digital is the best available option for the long-term preservation of films (both analog and digital). A groundbreaking report from the Science and Technology Council of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, *The Digital Dilemma* (Los Angeles: AMPAS, 2007) declares that "by current practice and definition, digital storage is short-term.… [M]ore than 100 years after its introduction, 35 mm film is the shining example of a standardized and sustainable format that is widely adopted, globally interoperable, stable, and well understood" (1, 56).

65 Laurent Mannoni (Cinémathèque française) and magic lantern specialist David Francis have discussed this subject in an email exchange (copied to the author) on December 10, 2007. "[S]hould film archives project original [magic lantern] slides," writes Mannoni, "with the risk of breaking them during projection? It's a little bit like asking … should film archives project nitrate copies every now and then at special events, with the risk of damaging the prints?" David Francis replies: "[o]f course [I don't] mean that original magic lantern slides could be used indiscriminately.… However, I think that it is important from a genuine museum perspective to make all *reasonable* efforts to show the beauty of original slides whenever possible."

66 Due to safety regulations, few archival organizations are currently able to project 35 mm nitrate prints. Some of them – including George Eastman House, the British Film Institute, and the Jugoslovenska Kinoteka in Belgrade – have periodically organized festivals dedicated exclusively to nitrate film.

28

Multiple Originals

The (Digital) Restoration and Exhibition of Early Films

Giovanna Fossati

This essay discusses how restoration leads to the creation of multiple originals. Because of its variety, this is even truer for early film, the corpus that roughly stems from the time frame 1894–1913. Differently edited and colored versions and heterogeneous forms of exhibition characterize early films when it comes to restoring them and exhibiting them to a contemporary audience.

Restored works are “new versions” but, at the same time, also “new originals” because they become the only remaining sign of what originally existed. This was the case with analog (photochemical) restoration and still applies today now that hybrid and digital technologies are being used for the restoration and exhibition of archival films. The form of the resulting new original depends on the policy embraced by the film archive responsible for its restoration. Such policies, which can be implicit or explicit, will be discussed with respect to different archival frameworks, while the different approaches to restoration will be defined according to different concepts.

Frameworks and concepts I have proposed elsewhere will be used to analyze the practice of restoring and exhibiting archival films and to lay the basis for a novel theory of film archival practice.[1] This new theorization is closely related to the discourse on the ontology of film and to the different

assumptions among film scholars and archivists around the film artifact. In the current transition to digital technology, which is radically changing the practice of film archives and academic reflection on the medium, a renewed dialogue between film archivists and scholars has become urgent. The *archival life of film* – the life of film once it has entered the archive, from selection to preservation and from restoration to exhibition and digitization – needs to be opened to academic discussion, as it defines the film (artifact) that will be available in the future, especially now that it is dramatically changing with the advent of new digital resources. This is particularly important for early films as their original material film artifacts are often on the verge of chemical deterioration. The choices made today in the restoration process will become an inseparable part of their new restored life.

An understanding of the technology available to film archivists and restorers today – analog, digital, and hybrid – is crucial for an informed discussion. In the second part of this essay, I will focus on those techniques and tools that can specifically influence the way early films can be preserved, restored, and exhibited. I will illustrate how new techniques facilitate to an even greater extent the creation of multiple versions and alternative exhibition modes of early films.

Throughout, I will refer to a number of early film restoration and exhibition projects, illustrating how different frameworks of reference lead to different use of the technologies and, therefore, to different results. In sum, new questions and new elements in my theorization of archival practice will arise from the issues typically posed by looking at early films – in particular, the question whether a typical framework for early films is already at work in film archival practice, and how it translates into current archival practices.

The Restoration of Early Films in Light of a Theory of Film Archival Practice

The discussion on the original in restoration is central to film archival practice. A long-standing opinion within the archival field holds that restoration should "maintain as much as possible the original format of the film."[2] I argue instead that maintaining the original film's look is more important than remaining true to the original format. For instance, if a digital copy of a film could reproduce, or simulate, the original characteristics of a stencil-colored 35mm nitrate film from the 1910s better than a copy on contemporary 35mm color polyester film stock, opting for the digital one would be more desirable. In fact, the digital copy introduces only another kind of estrangement from the original film format than the one introduced in analog duplication, going from nitrate to polyester film stock. If digital means can help restorers better simulate the look of the original film, they are as suitable as photochemical processes. This is true not only for restoration but also for the exhibition of restored films on a screen.[3] In this respect, I maintain that a requirement for a restoration to be complete is that it be in a form that can be exhibited to an audience. Otherwise it is preservation.

The modes of exhibiting early films further complicate the question around the original and its restoration. The movie theater setting or, more specifically, the purpose-built cinema was not yet established in the early period; instead, moving images were part of "a menagerie performance with the screen hung over the lion's cage, on the original marionette stage, or as a walk-in entertainment between freak show acts."[4] Restoring and reinterpreting the original experience of early cinema today, therefore, can lead to quite different results. These span from the simulation of a possible original setting, as in the case of the unique project *Crazy Cinématographe* discussed below, to the compilation of new thematic programs that draw inspiration from the original way of presenting the films without really attempting to recreate the original experience, as in the Biograph film programs presented by the British Film Institute (BFI) and the Nederlands Filmmuseum at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto in 2000, or to the historical context provided by Vanessa Toulmin in the voice-over added to the Mitchell & Kenyon films for DVD release.[5]

When carrying out a restoration, what should be considered the “original” of a film? Several answers are possible. One may focus on the text and style (e.g., the editing of the film, the title cards, the cinematography, the mise en scène) or on the material (e.g., the 35mm nitrate negative the film has been shot on, or the only surviving 9.5mm reduction, or the original tints). Restoring a film and being true to the original can mean a whole spectrum of things. The discourse within the film archival field seems to move precisely within the tension between the film as material and as conceptual artifact.

If we address the question “what is the original?” by considering film as a material artifact, the black-and-white camera negative of an early film can be seen as being as original as the multiple film prints deriving from it, in which title cards were inserted or colors were added. From this perspective, early films exist in multiple original versions, differing in editing, length, title cards, and coloring.

If we focus on the conceptual film artifact, the film viewed as original can be, for example, the one the filmmaker originally conceived, before it was altered by the production company or cut by the censor. In the specific case of early films, however, original versions can be particularly difficult to define as unique given that filmmakers, producers, and exhibitors all handled projection prints very freely and created multiple versions.[6] On top of this, the very idea of the filmmaker as *auteur*, and thereby conceiver of the original, can scarcely be applied to early films or, if retrospectively applied, it needs to take into account a completely different context than the one in which the later *auteur* has operated.

When we also consider exhibition in the restoration of early films, the question around the original becomes even more complex. As Tom Gunning pointed out when discussing the Biograph film programs presented at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto in 2000, these screenings demonstrated “the need for a greater consideration of the contexts in which these often seemingly enigmatic images were understood.”[7] Indeed, the itinerant and multimedia performance nature of early film exhibition needs to be considered, as it was discussed recently in an issue of *KINtop* edited by Martin Loiperdinger.[8] When exhibiting early films to a contemporary

audience, the presence of a narrator, or other kinds of live performance alongside the film projection, can be reconstructed, as in the *Crazy Cinématographe*, or can be ignored, as with most archival screenings of early films. In any case, audiences will experience a new interpretation of the original exhibition, as much as a representation of a play by Shakespeare is a new interpretation, whether it is performed in Elizabethan settings at the New Globe Theatre or in a modern setting.

In light of the above, it is clear that the restoration and exhibition of early films depends on one's interpretation of what the film (or performance) to be restored is. A theory of archival practice offers the basis to situate and understand the background to such interpretations and to critically discuss the restoration and the exhibition of early films. In what follows I will illustrate the frameworks and concepts I have proposed for a theorization of archival practice and show how they relate specifically to early films.

Frameworks

In a theory of archival practice the film as artifact, stretching from the material to the conceptual meaning of the term, is central. The material film artifact is typically the physical film preserved by the archivist, whereas the conceptual film artifact refers to its abstraction as a historical and aesthetic object. The dichotomy between material and conceptual artifacts plays an important role within the archive, and manifests itself in the tension between preservation and exhibition practices. Such tension has always been present in the film archive tradition and is often embodied by the figures of the programmer and the conservator within the same archive.

The discourse on the *archival life of film* moves within this tension, creating a middle ground for reflection and dialogue. This middle ground is the conceptual basis for the theorization of archival practice I propose. Within this discursive framing I have identified four relevant theoretical frameworks: "film as original," "film as art," "film as *dispositif*," and "film as state of the art." These function as the background understanding upon which a theorization of archival practice can be built. My theorization is pragmatic and instrumental for analyzing the film archival practice and the film archival artifact.

The “film as original” framework defines the historical film artifact as the carrier of the film’s authenticity, once it is re-territorialized by entering the film archive. Within this framework, reading the concept of original as discussed by Walter Benjamin through its analysis by Boris Groys,[9] it can be argued that each copy of a film acquires authenticity as it is a subsequent sign of a film’s life-line. The “film as original” framework could lead to opposite archival practices: on the one hand the original artifact could be considered so precious that it becomes untouchable; on the other hand access to the original artifact could be considered essential, with, as a consequence, an acceleration of its deterioration. In practice, most archives practice a policy in between these two extremes.

In the case of early films, access to the original artifact can be critical for assessing some of its most typical characteristics, such as the hard-edged orthochromatic film stocks and various early color techniques (e.g., hand coloring, early stencil, tinting and toning). Experiencing the projection of an early film via its restoration on modern film stock gives a distorted impression of its inherent material characteristics in terms of density, contrast, and colors. On the other hand, the projection of original film artifacts, besides being highly dangerous and usually illegal, would also greatly damage the artifact itself. A closer approximation of the original look of early films is possible today as new digital tools are more suitable than photochemical ones for simulating the inherent characteristics of early films, and, in general, of all obsolete photochemical techniques.

The “film as art” framework lies at the foundation of many film archives, in particular those with the specific mission of preserving avant-garde films or films of a particular filmmaker or *auteur*. A relevant example for early films can be found in the kind of approach reserved for the work of, for instance, Méliès, the Lumières, and Edison, almost as film-*auteurs avant la lettre*. These tendencies have recently led to some remarkable results, such as the collaboration between the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and the Library of Congress for the DVD release *Edison: The Invention of the Movies* (MoMA and Kino International, 2005) and that of more than twenty international film archives on *Georges Méliès: First Wizard of Cinema (1896–1913)* (Lobster Films, 2009).

Within this framework, especially from the *auteur* perspective, the accent shifts to the conceptual artifact rather than the material film artifact. But there are also examples where the material artifact is central. In avant-garde cinema, for instance, filmmakers sometimes use the film as a canvas (e.g., Oskar Fischinger painting and scratching the film emulsion). A parallel comes to mind between the practice of coloring film prints in early films and similar practices in later avant-garde films, and even contemporary experimental films.

In general, the parallel between early film and the avant-garde is very productive, as pointed out by Tom Gunning, Christa Blüminger, Annie van den Oever, and others.[10] Exploring the similarities between early films and some experimental films and multimedia installations, focusing in particular on the transient multimedia nature they share as live performances, can lead to new approaches to the restoration and exhibition of early films. I will come back to this point further on.

“Film as state of the art” defines a framework based on the idea that one of the driving forces in filmmaking is the search for pushing the limits of the medium by challenging technology in order to translate ideas into moving images. The quest for new technological and creative means to realize visual ideas has contributed to redrawing the limits of the film medium.

Early films have had a seminal role in this process. The first decennium of film and moving images overflows with examples of state-of-the-art technology, which, at the time, had the effect of establishing film as a new medium. This is true in different areas, including film formats (spanning 17.5–68mm), film equipment (from the individual viewer to the film projector), film tricks (from stop motion to reverse projection), and color techniques (from hand painting to stencil). The technological novelty of moving images as an appeal in itself should be addressed as an aspect of the state-of-the-art dimension of early film.

In this light, restoring an early film using state-of-the-art technology is in line with the very spirit out of which early films derived. A film made for a Mutoscope single-viewer device could be restored in a format suitable for the most recent version of a hand-held digital device as well as for wide-format projection. An example would be the early film *Conway Castle:*

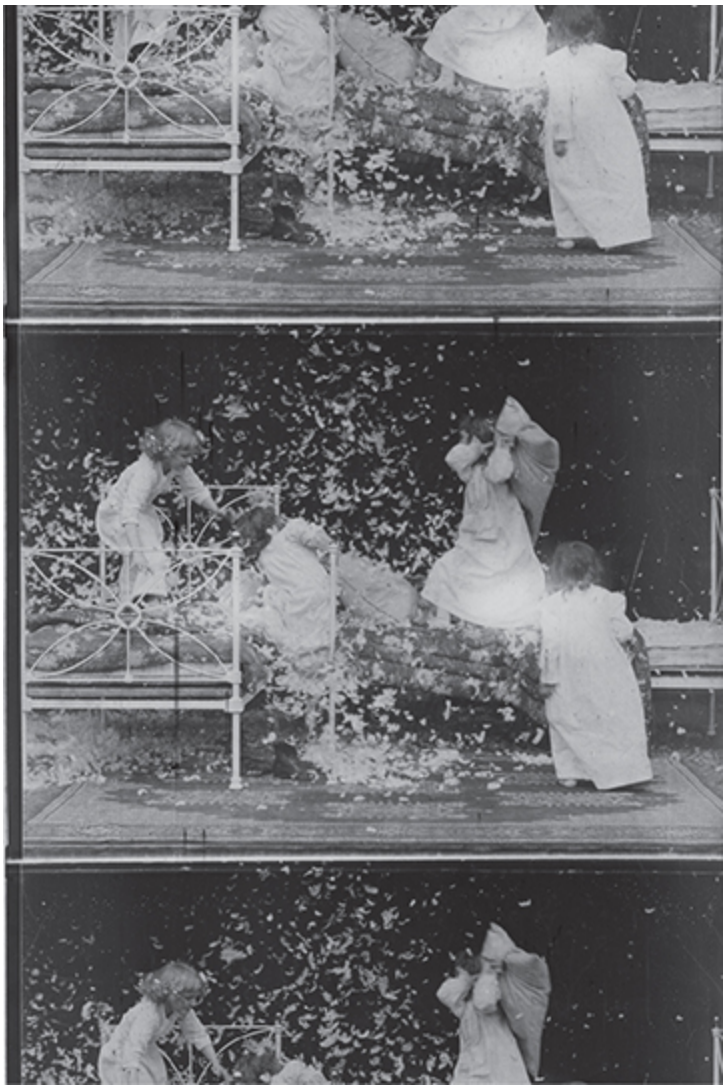
Panoramic View of Conway on the L. & N.W. Railway (British Mutoscope and Biograph, 1898), a hand-painted 68mm film restored by EYE Film Institute Netherlands (formerly the Nederlands Filmmuseum) in the 1990s, depicting a spectacular view of Conway Castle in Wales, taken from a moving train: it could be digitized at the highest possible resolution, and turned into an IMAX projection in order to reproduce, or restore if you wish, the spectacular quality of its exhibition in the late 1890s. This example brings us closer to the final framework, "film as *dispositif*."

Within the "film as *dispositif*" framework, as derived from the reading of Jean-Louis Baudry and Frank Kessler, archives promote the practice of exhibiting films within *dispositifs* other than the traditional one, i.e., film projection in a dark cinema.[11] An early film viewed on YouTube is one example of the new possible *dispositifs*.[12] The possibilities offered by digital technology to create new *dispositifs* multiply by the day, from 3D (IMAX) digital cinema projection to streaming video on mobile devices. Note that early films and other media also used to be experienced within *dispositifs* alternative to classical cinema, from devices such as the Zoetrope and the Praxinoscope to single-viewer peepshows such as the Kinetoscope or the Mutoscope or later home-movie equipment such as the Pathé Kok.

"Film as *dispositif*" can be a particularly relevant framework for early films since their exhibition setting was different from the traditional cinema setting. Cinemas, the home of film exhibition as we have known it for about a century, became widespread only around 1910. Both the reconstruction of a typical early cinema *dispositif* and the exhibition of early film within a different *dispositif* would fit this framework. As Kessler points out, "a historical analysis based on the concept of *dispositif* reinterpreted in a pragmatic perspective could actually take into account different uses of one and the same text within different exhibition contexts, or different institutional framings."[13] An interesting example is a restoration project, currently still in a development stage, which envisions the transfer of the British Mutoscope and Biograph collection onto the IMAX film format. This project, based on an idea by film researchers Adrian Wood and Luke McKernan, intends to translate an obsolete wide film gauge onto a contemporary one.[14] Because Biograph films were shot on film stock that

was 68mm wide and did not have any perforations along the side, the only existing format that would be comparable in terms of resolution and aspect ratio would be IMAX. The Biograph collection offers an excellent case to be translated into current *dispositifs* as these films were originally shown both as big screen projections and via single-viewer Mutoscope devices.

Figure 28.1 Example of 68mm film: *A Pillow Fight* (American Mutoscope Company, 1897). Courtesy of EYE Film Institute Netherlands.



A further specification of the proposed frameworks, which can be applied to all kinds of archival films, would be productive in view of the particular case of early films, as the frameworks presented so far do not yet include the possibility for other multimedia performances in addition to film projection. This blind spot is visible in current archival practice for early

films. Indeed, in the restoration and exhibition of early films the interaction with other concurrent performances is not yet properly addressed and projects that take the performative dimension into account are still the exception. This is also the case for the programming and exhibition at specialized film festivals. Claude Bertemes points out that these events still overlook two important areas in early film exhibition, namely "its *performative* quality as a theatrical and gestural apparatus" and "its *sociological* quality as a mass medium and component of popular culture."[15]

Figure 28.2 Outside the *Crazy Cinématographe* tent at the fairground Schueberfouer, Luxembourg (2008), courtesy of Guy Edmonds.

In this line, it would be desirable to extend these thoughts to the *archival life of early film* by defining a suitable framework for restoration and exhibition practices. A "film as performance" framework would make it possible to take the broader performative setting into consideration, bringing together the film, the lion in the cage, the narrator, and the freak and making them interact with each other and with the audience.

An exceptional example of archival exhibition practice that can be inscribed in the "film as performance" framework is the above-mentioned *Crazy Cinématographe* project. Trier University and the Cinémathèque de la Ville de Luxembourg are the main partners in this project, which since 2007 has recreated the experience of a traveling program "performing" early cinema in a tent at a number of fairgrounds and carnivals in Luxembourg and neighboring countries. The rotating film programs included *Comedy & Burlesque*, *Magical Mystery Tour*, *Cabinet of the Bizarre*, and *The Sex Lives of Our Grandparents*.[16]

"Film as performance" highlights the parallel between early cinema and experimental films and installations. This approach could be very useful in archival exhibition (seeing film programs as a unique film performance where more performative elements and different media interact with the screen and the audience) but also in the restoration process. It is particularly interesting to research the similarities between the restoration of early films and that of experimental films that have been conceived as a performance. Examples are Harry Smith's *Mahagonny* (1970–80), discussed in detail elsewhere,[17] or the restoration of *We Can't Go Home Again* by Nicholas Ray and his students at Harpur College (1972–6).[18] In both cases the restoration process deals with an artifact, which is both the existing material film artifacts (negatives, projection prints, and work prints) and the conceptual artifact of the film shown only a few times, at Anthology Film Archives as multiple 16mm projection in the case of *Mahagonny*, or a few times in different versions (at the Cannes film festival in 1973 and on a few other occasions) in the case of *We Can't Go Home Again*. In these examples the role of interpretation in the restoration process becomes evident, as is the case with early films. The need for a different approach than "film as original" also becomes urgent, as what is being restored here is actually a performance.

Concepts

In addition to film archives, film laboratories also influence the *archival life of film* in the way they practice film restoration. Laboratories influence the

way new technology is applied in film restoration by selecting specific hardware, software, and personnel. And, in this time of technological transition, they play a key role in maintaining photochemical equipment and adapting new digital tools to photochemical films. In this perspective, knowledge of laboratories' contribution in reshaping film archival practice is also important for an informed discussion of restored films.

Because of laboratories' ancillary role as service providers, their agency cannot be described in terms of frameworks, but rather in terms of theoretical concepts. Three concepts derived from new media studies are particularly relevant and useful in discussing the transition to digital in the archival field. These concepts are convergence/divergence, remediation, and simulation. Here I will illustrate how these different concepts can influence the way early films are restored. Through discussion of relevant restorations of early films, I will also show how concepts and frameworks interact, leading to different possible restoration versions. These are the new originals, if you wish, that present-day and future audiences will encounter.

Out of interactions between the two inversely related concepts convergence/divergence – elaborated out of the idea of convergence proposed by Ithiel de Sola Pool and further explored by David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins[19] – emerge discussions about those laboratory practices that lead to specialization on the one hand and differentiation on the other. As schizophrenic as it may sound, the process of technological convergence is also causing a divergence. Analog and digital, one next to the other, are producing highly hybrid restorations.

One example of convergence/divergence, within the "film as original" framework, can be found in the restoration of a stencil-colored nitrate print of the film *Les Pyrénées pittoresques* (Picturesque Pyrenees, Pathé, 1910), as it was carried out by Haghefilm laboratories in Amsterdam for EYE. In this case, after digitization on an optical scanner suitable for fragile early films, the data were restored through image stabilization, de-flickering, and dust removal. After color grading and proper calibration, three black-and-white separation masters were produced by printing the data on three separate black-and-white positive films, one for each primary color. The three separation masters were then printed in registration (i.e., perfectly overlapping the images of the three masters on one single combined image)

on one intermediate color film stock, and from there a color projection print was made photochemically. This project offers an example of convergence/divergence in the way that carrying it out relied on a mixture of state-of-the-art techniques derived from both the photochemical tradition and current digital postproduction methods.[20]

The concept remediation derives from Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's seminal book *Remediation: Understanding New Media*.[21] When applied to the case of archival film, it characterizes the practice that remediates old film (and old restoration) technologies in an attempt to "rival or refashion them in the name of the real," using Bolter and Grusin's words.[22] The "real" in this case is the film artifact being restored.

Laboratories that focus on the Digital Intermediate process by digitizing original film artifacts and by carrying out all the restoration work in the digital domain embody this particular interpretation of film restoration. With regard to early film, remediation is not yet a completely viable option, as the technology still poses too many obstacles. First of all the digitization of early films is often a problem as they are too shrunken and fragile to be scanned in modern commercial scanners. Also, digitally restoring early films requires extensive manual work as one cannot fully rely yet on current automatic restoration software. In line with the remediation concept, the exhibition of the final restored film may best be carried out via digital projection, although this technology is not yet fine-tuned for early films since they ought to be projected at a slower speed than the 24 frames per second sound-film standard.

The restoration of the Mitchell & Kenyon collection, carried out by the BFI between 2000 and 2004, partly embraces, in my view, the remediation concept within a "film as original" framework. This very important collection of mainly local films counts 826 rolls of camera negative nitrate films corresponding to as many separate titles. Being camera negatives they have an excellent photographic quality and are, therefore, the best possible starting point for a restoration. They often show signs of chemical deterioration, however, which has made them brittle and badly shrunken. Nevertheless, the restoration work has been able to bring these historically important and fantastic-looking images back. They are now available in

different formats, from 35mm prints and High Definition masters for cinema projection to DVD and YouTube.[23]

This project can be associated with the “film as original” framework because the restorers have opted for photochemical duplication of the original film artifact without resorting to digital tools. By doing so they remained true to the original duplication process and to the original film artifacts as they were found, damage included. At the same time, they have chosen High Definition, as this digital exhibition format does make it possible to project the image at very low speeds. The speed at which the Mitchell & Kenyon films were shot (and projected) was typically 10–12 frames per second. Generally, today’s archival analog projectors cannot operate at less than 14 frames per second. High Definition projection is the best possible option today to remediate an obsolete technology such as hand-cranked projectors, which made possible slow and adaptable speeds.

A final concept to introduce is that of simulation, based on the idea that a typical characteristic of digital media is the ability to simulate analog reproduction media.[24] From this perspective, digital comes with the promise of better restoration tools. Nevertheless, the combination of the digital and analog technologies still provides the best solution for restoration. All laboratories can be associated with the concept of simulation, but especially those where digital technologies are accompanied by experience and a strong tradition in the use of analog optical work.

An example of this is Cineric Inc., a New York-based laboratory with a long history of optical special effects and restoration work. In the case of simulation, it would be useful to return to a case related to a Biograph film: this time it is not a restoration but rather a new film, Bill Morrison’s *Outerborough* (2005), which makes use of archival footage. In this project, carried out at Cineric, the same archival footage was superimposed onto itself, once from beginning to end and once backwards, and the same superimposed image was doubled on a split screen. The source material was a single tracking shot taken from the front of a train crossing the Brooklyn Bridge. For Morrison’s new film a scan of the duplicate negative was chosen, made from the original 68mm footage, *Across the Brooklyn Bridge* (American Mutoscope and Biograph, 1899), held at the BFI.[25]

This example fits the simulation concept because a digital process has been chosen for recreating a sophisticated analog optical effect. Note, however, that the final result was shot back to film as an exhibition medium, showing once again that hybridism is typical of this transitional time. Although not a restoration, Morrison's film needs to be seen as a new version of *Across the Brooklyn Bridge*, for this new film made in 2005 will be for many the only way they will ever view the original images shot in 1899.

To complete the big picture of this transitional practice, I will now move to a discussion of archival practice from a more practical standpoint, focusing on the changes brought about by the introduction of digital tools that most influence the way early films can be restored and exhibited.

(Digital) Restoration of Early Films

The first point to stress when discussing the use of digital tools for film restoration is that they allow an extremely high degree of intervention, often to a point beyond recognition. In doing so they charge the restorer with great responsibility. This is true of photochemical tools also, but to a lesser extent. Digital technology poses with renewed relevancy questions on film restoration ethics, such as "what is an original?" and "is a film restorer allowed to *improve* the original aspect of a film and, if so, where does the boundary between improvement and distortion lie?" The theoretical frameworks I introduced earlier can be useful when addressing such questions and may serve as a functional instrument to theorize archival practice. A basic understanding of the tools available for film restoration and exhibition today is also crucial for an appreciation of the process affecting film artifacts during restoration, and for furthering the necessary dialogue between scholars and archivists on film archival practices.

I will focus here only on restoration and exhibition practices and will show the potential and limitations of current digital and analog technologies. I will address in particular those digital tools that are useful for correcting the damage that recurs in early films and for restoring the typical characteristics of these films. It is important to keep in mind,

however, that with respect to long-term preservation, analog technology is still considered the most reliable technology available today.[26]

Software for the restoration of early film images tackles two sorts of problems: spatial problems such as scratches, patches, and so-called dust, and temporal problems such as image instability and flickering. It does so through the analysis of motion inside a scene (to identify and eliminate scratches and stains), the identification of an average light level (for de-flickering), and the analysis of position (for stabilization). For the restoration of colors a different kind of software is used, what is known as a digital grading suite.

Spatial problems are typically scratches or patches, mostly caused by wear, deep enough to have removed part of the emulsion and, therefore, of the image. This kind of damage cannot be corrected by photochemical duplication, as wet gate printing can only deal with superficial scratches. The same is true for almost any other type of physical damage to the emulsion, often referred to as dust.

Motion analysis, dust detection, and automatic removal tools unfortunately do not work flawlessly. Sometimes elements are recognized as extraneous even if they are part of the image. The greatest problems arise with elements appearing only in one frame, like the sparkle of a jewel, or with elements moving very quickly, such as raindrops. These kinds of image elements can be confused by motion analysis with small scratches or particles stuck to the emulsion and be substituted with what is found in the same area, in an adjacent area, or in a neighboring frame.

In the restoration of the Mitchell & Kenyon collection, for instance, the choice was made not to apply the digital tools described above. The restored films show the damage as it appeared on the artifacts at the time of restoration (except for the superficial scratches that can be removed by wet gate duplication). In the case of the Méliès DVD release mentioned above, Lobster chose instead to digitally clean up the films from the damage present on the film artifacts. One may argue that the DVD release of a restored film is not its “official” restored version, but I would argue that it is, nevertheless, one of the new versions Méliès films will be known by.

A different sort of damage is the sort that causes a very significant loss of information in the image. Tears on the surface of the film can be physically

repaired on the film itself, for instance, but even if the two edges are accurately reattached, they remain visible. Also, splices that have exceeded the space between frames typically invade and alter the image. For this severe damage it is often necessary to intervene with digital tools that generally require constant human supervision. Two kinds of tools are at hand. The first is a paint tool by which the operator can intervene on the damaged areas by using pixels as varnish. The pixels can be cloned from neighboring areas or frames. The other way is to interpolate (parts of) neighboring frames. Interpolation is usually quicker but is by definition less precise.

Early films are typically affected by all the kinds of damage described so far. They can be either in the film to be restored or could have been duplicated from a previous generation, the original camera negative, or any element in between. Of course, the restoration should make use of the earliest generation element, if still suitable. In the case of a digital restoration, the earliest element, possibly the original camera negative, should be digitized. Unfortunately, in many cases this is impossible, and the best source for restoration is a poorer duplicate that has survived, bearing not only the signs of photographic loss due to photochemical duplication but also the signs of every duplicated defect that was present on the source element. In the case of early film, camera negatives are in many ways different from projection prints. They are not edited but usually exist in loose reels per shot scene. Title cards are often missing. And they are black and white, whereas the prints might have been colored, by tinting, toning, stencil, or a combination of these techniques.

Temporal damage, such as instability and flicker, is typically caused by previous inadequate duplication and poses different problems. All films, especially early ones shot with manual cameras, have an intrinsic instability, which may have been amplified by duplication. In this case, stabilization of the image during restoration seems a justifiable choice. Many kinds of software are already capable of stabilizing entire sequences automatically, taking a number of frames as a reference to stabilize the others. The result is an average position of the frame. In this case, the degree of stabilization is set by the operator, who has to make an educated guess as to how stable the frames might have been originally.

A similar case to instability is that of flickering. Here the instability concerns the lighting of a scene, and is often due to an error in duplication. This problem can be solved digitally by choosing a number of reference frames throughout to set an average target brightness for the rest. As in the case of stabilization, the degree of the original flicker is impossible to establish with precision.

An interesting example, in which different levels of stabilization were applied, can be found in the project *Exotic Europe*. A number of European archives contributed to this project by restoring and digitizing early non-fiction films, resulting in 2000 in the compilation of a traveling exhibition and a DVD.[27] For this project the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv (Berlin and Koblenz) applied restoration tools to the digital copy of its restored films, a quite exceptional practice at the time for a film archive.[28] It is interesting to note, in retrospect, the striking difference between the films on the *Exotic Europe* DVD that underwent some kind of stabilization, de-flickering, and digital clean-up and those that did not. Indeed, today the practice of stabilizing digitized films for DVD or online release is much more common.

Color fading is particularly relevant when discussing the restoration of early film, because a large number of films from the early period were colored using different techniques, all leading to unstable colors. For techniques such as hand-painting, tinting, toning, and stenciling, used to color black-and-white films from 1895 until about 1930, digital technology offers a system of simulation which can give results that are much closer to the look of the original colors than photochemical duplication methods.[29]

In the case of severe color fading, digital technology offers solutions that are in any event impossible within the photochemical process. Postproduction digital color grading today is more reliable and much more flexible than analog grading. This is because it allows each color component, red, green, and blue, to be altered independently of the others. This is the way to reintroduce a faded color component without affecting the others, unlike photochemical grading, which always affects all three color layers. Such flexibility in color restoration has led to particularly good results in the restoration of stencil-colored early films, as the restoration of

Les Pyrénées pittoresques, mentioned above, has shown. This film has been restored both photochemically and digitally and the digital restoration shows undeniably better results when approaching the neutral black-and-white image as well as the applied colors present on the original nitrate print.[30]

The main obstacle in the restoration of color, whether it is carried out digitally or not, is the lack of reference. Once again, film restorers need to resort to an educated guess. Restorers must rely on the knowledge of the historical and technological context the work to be restored originates from, as well as on an understanding of the work itself and its maker(s). But this work is also tied up with the choice of framework and concept presented above.

As I have argued, a restoration is complete only when it is in a form that can be exhibited to an audience. For early films, such modes of exhibition can be very different, varying from a cinema projection with live accompaniment to a multimedia live performance. For these reasons the exhibition possibilities of early films available today cannot be disregarded in this discussion.

(Digital) Exhibition of Early Films

Whereas film digital technology is becoming a powerful and valued resource in the fields of restoration and access to archival film, there is still some resistance among film archivists in accepting digital as an alternative form of exhibition, principally for two reasons. On the one hand, digital projection at high resolution (the only kind of digital projection whose quality is comparable with that of film projection) is in many ways not yet a viable option. There is more to it than that, however. Not just preserving films but also preserving the practice of film projection, with its related viewing experience, is perceived as a film archive's primary task. For many film archivists, projecting a (digitized) film-born film through a digital projector means betraying its original form. This should not come as a surprise since the FIAF code of ethics explicitly states that only a duplicate on film, in the original format, is to be considered a preservation master.[31]

In addition, a number of film archive curators, such as Paolo Cherchi Usai and Alexander Horwath,[32] and Mark-Paul Meyer,[33] have variously underlined the aspect of "authenticity" that only the projection of a film can provide. Taking their argument further, authenticity is fully experienced only when an original (vintage) print is projected. This argument, closely related to the "film as original" framework discussed above, will gain a different relevancy when commercial film theaters switch to digital projection and new "films" become completely digital. At that time film archives will have to introduce digital projection to remain true to new "digitally born" films. On the other hand, they will probably remain the only place where the experience of traditional film projection will be preserved.

In reality, digital projectors capable of fully simulating the experience of an early film exhibition are not (yet) available on the market. The main technical limitation is the incorrect reproduction of early films' projection speeds and aspect ratios. Digital projectors can currently run at two fixed standards, 24 or 48 frames per second, whereas early films were shot, and should therefore be projected, at varying speeds ranging from 10, as in the case of the Mitchell & Kenyon collection, to 48 frames per second, as in the case of the Biograph films. There are ways to simulate the right speed with digital projectors but they all involve a so-called stretching process. In this process a number of extra frames must be added to reach the standard of 24 or 48 frames per second needed to project the film on a standard digital projector. The stretching process exists also in the photochemical domain and is a controversial practice within the film archival field as it does introduce non-original elements (e.g., new frames, abnormal camera movements) to the film exhibition experience. It is frustrating to have to recur to such a subterfuge in the digital domain as well. In principle a digital projector could run at any speed and the current constraint is only due to the fact that manufacturers focus only on contemporary releases, and because standard makers (such as the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers [SMPTE]) have not yet included historical projection speeds in their documents. The matter of aspect ratio is a similar one as the digital projection of a historical aspect ratio can be achieved today only in the case of standard widescreen formats. Frustration in this case comes

from the fact that a historical aspect ratio projected digitally in this manner will not take advantage of all available resolution, thereby losing image detail.[34] This is again the result of inappropriate standards and is not a technological limitation. It is possible to recreate the impression of lower frame rate projection both digitally, as in the case of the restored Mitchell & Kenyon films discussed earlier, or photochemically, as in the case of the restoration of *Beyond the Rocks* (1922).[35]

In conclusion, many tools (analog, digital, and hybrid) are available today for restoring and exhibiting early films. New digital tools, however, offer solutions that analog techniques cannot provide when considering the state of deterioration of many early films. Each restoration, however it is conducted and whatever framework and concept it is based upon, leads, in my opinion, to the creation of a new (original) version that will be a new reenactment of the film performance of a particular film. In this perspective, a broad understanding of the chosen restoration tools and strategies is necessary, together with a critical discussion of the intentions these multiple versions stem from. It should preferably be an understanding shared both by those who create these versions and those who view, use, and research them. It is from such common understanding that a productive dialogue and meaningful new questions will arise which address the *archival life of early film*.

Notes

1 See Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 103–45.

2 Paul Read and Mark-Paul Meyer, eds., *Restoration of Motion Picture Film* (Newton: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2000), 1.

3 For a discussion of the ontological implications of this statement, see Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel*, 109–23.

4 Vanessa Toulmin, “Cuckoo in the Nest: Edwardian Itinerant Exhibition Practices and the Transition to Cinema in the United Kingdom from 1901 to 1906,” *The Moving Image* 10, no. 1 (2010): 62.

5 For more information about the *Crazy Cinématographe* project, see Claude Bertemes, “Cinématographe Reloaded: Notes on the Fairground Cinema Project *Crazy Cinématographe*,” in *Travelling Cinema in Europe: Sources and Perspectives*, ed. Martin Loiperdinger (Frankfurt: Stroemfeld, 2008), 191–218. For the Biograph programs, see Luke McKernan and Mark van den Tempel, eds., “The Wonders of the Biograph,” special issue, *Griffithiana* 66–70 (1999/2000). The DVD release of the Mitchell & Kenyon collection is *Electric Edwardians: The Films of Mitchell & Kenyon* (BFI, 2005).

6 With regard to the role of exhibitors, see Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1983), 193; and “American Vitagraph 1897–1901,” *Cinema Journal* 22, no. 3 (1983): 4–46.

7 Tom Gunning, “A Quarter of a Century Later: Is Early Cinema Still Early?,” *KINtop* 12 (2003): 25.

8 Loiperdinger, *Travelling Cinema in Europe*. In this perspective, and in particular on the interplay between live performance and moving pictures, see Charles Musser, “A Cinema of Contemplation, a Cinema of Discernment: Spectatorship, Intertextuality and Attractions in the 1890s,” in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 159–79; and “The May Irwin Kiss: Performance and the Beginning of Cinema,” in *Visual Delights 2: Exhibition and Reception*, eds. Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Popple (Eastleigh: John Libbey, 2005), 96–115; and Andrew Shail, “Intermediality in Early and Silent Cinema,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 8, no. 1 (2010): 3–15.

9 See Walter Benjamin, “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit” (1936); trans. Harry Zohn, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations* (London: Fontana, 1992), 211–44; and Boris Groys, “The Aura of Profane Enlightenment,” in *(The World May Be) Fantastic*, ed. Ewen McDonald, published in conjunction with the Sydney Biennale of the same name, 2002, http://cgi.eigen-art.com/user-cgi-bin/files/fischer_elsani_bgroys.pdf.

10 Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attraction: Early Cinema, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde,” in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed.

Thomas Elsaesser (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 56–63; Christa Blüminger, “Lumière, the Train and the Avant-Garde,” in Strauven, *Cinema of Attractions*, 245–64; Annie van den Oever, “*Ostrannenie*, ‘The Montage of Attractions’ and Early Cinema’s ‘Properly Irreducible *Alien* Quality’,” in *Ostrannenie*, ed. Annie van den Oever (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 33–58.

11 Jean-Louis Baudry, “Effets idéologiques produits par l’appareil de base,” *Cinéthique* 7/8 (1970); trans. Alan Williams, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 286–98; Frank Kessler, “Notes on dispositif,” work in progress (Utrecht: Media Research Seminar, 2007), http://www.let.uu.nl/~frank.e.kessler/personal/Dispositif_20Notes11-2007.pdf. The “*dispositif* theory” is usually translated into English as the “apparatus theory.” Here the French *dispositif* is preferred as it better describes the combination of the technical apparatus (“*appareil de base*”) and the setting that combines the audience, the technical apparatus, and the projected film.

12 See Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau, eds., *The YouTube Reader* (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2009), for a discussion of the relationship between the film archive and YouTube, in particular the chapters in *Part IV: Storage*.

13 Frank Kessler, “The Cinema of Attractions as Dispositif,” in Strauven, *Cinema of Attractions*, 61.

14 Many of the films made by the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company between 1896 and 1903 are held by the BFI and by EYE and were restored in the 1990s. See http://www.biomaxfilms.com (accessed February 13, 2011) for more information on this project.

15 Bertemes, “Cinématographe Reloaded,” 192.

16 For more detailed information on the setup and programming of the *Crazy Cinématographe*, see Bertemes, “Cinématographe Reloaded.”

17 Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel*, 225–31.

18 This restoration, carried out by the Nicholas Ray Foundation, EYE Film Institute Netherlands, and Academy Film Archive, was premiered at the 68th Venice International Film Festival in September 2011.

19 David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, eds., *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); and Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

20 Note that black-and-white separation is considered the best long-term conservation method for color films.

21 Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

22 Ibid., 65.

23 For detailed information about the restoration process, see Patrick Russell, "Truth at 10 Frames per Second? Archiving Mitchell and Kenyon," in *The Lost World of Mitchell & Kenyon: Edwardian Britain on Film*, eds. Vanessa Toulmin, Simon Popple, and Patrick Russell (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 12–20; the documentary *Road to Restoration*, part of the DVD *Electric Edwardians: The Films of Mitchell & Kenyon* (BFI, 2005); and http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/mk/preservation.html (accessed February 1, 2011).

24 Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); David Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).

25 See also http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?object_id=104617 (accessed January 15, 2011).

26 See Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel*, 64–70.

27 *Exotic Europe: Journeys into Early Cinema* (Berlin/Koblenz: Fachhochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft/Nederlands Filmmuseum/Cinema Museum/Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, 2000).

28 See also Harald Brandes, "Film Restoration at the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv," in *Exotic Europe*, 20–5.

29 For a detailed discussion of color in silent films, see Giovanna Fossati, "When Cinema was Coloured," in *Tutti i colori del mondo. Il colore nei mass media tra 1900 e 1930/All the Colours of the World: Colours in Early Mass Media 1900–1930*, ed. Gamma Group (Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 1998), 121–32; and "Coloured Images Today: How to Live with Simulated Colours (and Be Happy)," in *'Disorderly Order': Colours in*

Silent Film, eds. Daan Hertogs and Nico de Klerk (Amsterdam: Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1996), 83–9.

30 Ulrich Ruedel and Daniela Currò at the Haghefilm Foundation are carrying out important comparative research in this respect. The results will be published in Simon Brown, Sarah Street, and Liz Watkins, eds., *Colour and the Moving Image* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

31 See the *Code of Ethics* published by the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF) (Brussels: FIAF, 1998).

32 Paolo Cherchi Usai, David Francis, Alexander Horwath, and Michael Loebenstein, eds., *Film Curatorship: Archives, Museums, and the Digital Marketplace* (Vienna: Synema Publikationen, 2008).

33 Mark-Paul Meyer, "Traditional Projection in a Digital Age," *Journal of Film Preservation* 70 (2005): 15–18, http://www.FIAFnet.org/pdf/uk/FIAF70.pdf.

34 An early film projected digitally will result in a 1.33:1 aspect ratio being screened in a 1.85:1 ratio and will thus include black areas at the right and left side of the image.

35 For a detailed discussion of this restoration and exhibition project see Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel*, 235–45.

29

Pointing Forward, Looking Back

Reflexivity and Deixis in Early Cinema and Contemporary Installations

Nanna Verhoeff

Enter a machine that spins out movement, mile after mile.
Gaze through the window at objects rushing by, out of sync with your body
Pieces of the landscape move at different speeds
The foreground is blurred and the background looks like an outline
Houses and whole cities roll, break a
part and recombine
The world becomes a torrent of images
The machine eye of Zoomscape burns through space revealing that which is usually unseen
It crosses forbidden thresholds, glimpses private lives
Encounters feel all the more delightful for their lack of substance
You can go to places you never dreamed of going
You are there for the ride

(Texts from *Zoomscape*, Eye Film Institute Netherlands, 2010, inspired by Mitchell Schwarzer)[1]

In September 2010, EYE Film Institute Netherlands (formerly Film Museum) launched the program *Zoomscape*, an exhibition about film, trains, and perception. The program took place on platform 2A at Amsterdam Central Station. It consisted of train films from all periods in film history, presented in a program leaflet with "departure" times and film titles as destinations in a train schedule. Early cinema held a distinct and prominent place in the program; the four categories were fiction, experimental, documentary, and silent film. Interspersed with other, later films, early cinema also had its own separate schedule in the program, announced as a "compilation of the archive" with more than twenty titles, including *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat* (*Train Entering a Station*, Lumière, 1895), *Conway Castle* (British Mutoscope & Biograph, 1898), *Irish Mail* (American Mutoscope & Biograph, 1898), bits from the EYE Film Institute's collection of unidentified fragments, *Bits & Pieces*, *Dans les Pyrénées* (1913), and *A Railroad Wooing* (1913).[2]

Figure 29.1 2010 *Zoomscape* installation (Eye Film Institute) at Amsterdam Central Station. Photo: Maureen Mens, 2010.

Thematically, the program was positioned by the institute as zooming in on the travel trope inherent in the cinematic experience. Or in their words: “Trains and films go hand-in-hand. When the first trains chugged up to speed around 1835 they changed the way we experience reality. The world became a moving image, the carriage windows an imaginary film screen on which new horizons passed by.”[3] Others have, indeed, examined the intricate bond between the cinema, as technology of vision, and the train as modern technology of transportation. Congruent to both machines is that the visuality they afford is one of movement and transport, physical movement in the case of the train and virtual in the optical illusion of the cinema’s moving images. The novelty of the moving image and the sensationalism of mechanized travel provided a powerful combination of expanded vision and speed. In this sense, the *Zoomscape* program is not only about train travel; it is about cinema as a medium of virtual transport.[4]

Moreover, I consider this *exhibition*, its *program*, and its *installation* as a historical event. Not because of its monumental status – which it did have,

in the double sense of the word – but because of its meaning as event both *in* and *about* history. In *Zoomscape*, the historical films are relocated from the film (and archival) context to a context of mobility and temporary presence – the station today as a place of transit – and thus do, today, what they did then. I will show how a deictic layering produces an effect that enables us to speak of a multi-directional film installation rather than a uni-directional film exhibition. Screening them in this particular location magnifies, "blows up" the key feature of the moving image. These films do what they say: showing transport while transporting; moving – as moving images – they move people. This brings me to the point of this history writing: the reflexivity that sharpens our understanding of both past and present cultural developments. My discussion is devoted to this reflexivity.

Reflexivity of the Medium

The ride film is part of a pervasive trope in the history of screen media. In modern visual culture, in the age of mechanical reproduction – in Benjaminian terms – and mechanized vision – in Dziga Vertov's words – at moments of transition, newly emerging or transforming screen media often reflect on the virtual mobility that the new medium or technology facilitates for its users. Or, as Janet Murray formulates it, writing about immersion as transportation, in the case of digital media: "Part of the early work in any medium is the exploration of the border between the representational world and the actual world."[5] I suggest that it is this border – defined in medium-specific terms – that we seek to explore, expand, and transgress in the recurring trope of (mediated) mobility. We can trace this desire from early cinema to our contemporary screens.

The kind of self-reflection I will examine here, then, is not, or not necessarily, a critical, intellectual reflection *à la* Habermas,[6] but rather a merging of mirroring and probing. Today's media reflections suggest that virtual mobility and screen-based navigation constitute effectively a primary paradigm driving digital screen media. This primacy of navigation entails more fundamental positions regarding the relations, so central in discussions of early cinema, between our culture's predominant modes of

address: narrative and spectacle. Both modes are centered on sense-making, in many different meanings of the phrase: from making sense as bringing logic, making understandable, and bringing about (or privileging) meaning, to mobilizing the sensory domain of attraction and affect.[7]

Even when not consciously thought through, the activity of self-reflection is important because it brings about what it says. Rather than simply mirroring content, self-reflection makes it possible that the (critical) analysis of what its object stands for brings into existence that very aspect of the medium. In this case, transportation within the film brings about the transporting ability of the moving image. The train films make the convergence between the moving image and the transport it represents – as well as constitutes. This is the *performativity* of self-reflection. I use medium reflexivity, reflection, and self-reflection interchangeably. The reflexivity in media texts of the specificities of the medium they are made for/in can indeed be called reflexive or self-reflexive. This "self," however, is not to be confused with the deictic terminology invoked in this chapter. I mean it in the most literal sense: media texts as statements about their own media-specific status.

As I have argued before in my book *The West in Early Cinema* on the convergence of emerging cinema and the depiction of the American West, particularly as a still-present frontier, the popularization of travel is not only contemporaneous with the advent of cinema; it is also structurally congruent with cinema while over-determining the latter thematically.[8] In light of this temporal conjunction it is significant that, similarly, at the heart of both "new," modern culture and the "new" medium are the hot topics of movement, vicarious displacement, and expansion, both spatial and perceptual. The *Zoomscape* program at the train station must be seen in this light; it cannot be reduced to a thematic rhetoric.

The recurring topic of travel in moving images at both historical moments – around 1900 and around 2000 – is thus no coincidence, and the reflexivity of the films in the first decade of the medium suggests how this theme's frequent occurrence is best understood. Within the fragmentation and variability we can discern a logic of kaleidoscopic connections and attractions that celebrate the moment of radical change: a change evidenced by new mobilities and the then-new medium that provided ways to show

them. Similarly, the *Zoomscape* installation reflects on the ways in which screens give us access to space; indeed, how they determine our relationship to space. In this sense the media precede and thus pre-write (not to say pre-scribe) the way scholars and users later come to understand them. The object pre-formats how we can study it.[9]

Media reflection means that an artifact in a particular medium probes that medium's features and impact. Moreover, as Mary Ann Doane suggests in her discussion of medium specificity at the moment of innovation and transition, this entails not only highlighting possibilities, but also the medium's technological and material limitations: "Proper to the aesthetic, then, would be a continual reinvention of the medium through a resistance to resistance, a transgression of what are given as material limitations, which nevertheless requires those material constraints as its field of operations."[10]

Such reflections (here phrased as "reinvention") on the possibilities and limitations of the medium are not a mere issue of aesthetics, nor are they to be reduced to commercial self-promotion. Speaking theoretically, I contend that reflexivity in a broad sense is an inevitable cultural mode pervasively present in all media artifacts. This is so because cultural existence implies the desire to understand how things work. This need for exploring possibilities, limitations, and medium-specificity, however, is particularly pertinent to moments of innovation and transition. Specifically at those moments, the artifacts are reflexive in that they inform us about the historical position of their newness, including their future, as well as, consequently, our own. This can easily be assessed in an analysis of the meeting of two moments of increasing and accelerated development of new media, a century apart.

The exhibition, or as I will call it in the wake of *Zoomscape*, the installation of early cinema on-screen today creates a specific synergy between each screen culture's tropes of medium reflection: a layered mobility of virtual transport (cinema) and spatial expansion (screens in public space). This entails both the on-screen image of mobility and the positioning of the screen. Moreover, taking *Zoomscape* as an archival performance that brings about a particular *liveness* to early films as archival objects, the exhibition also suggests a layered temporal mobility: from the

present of filming, to the present of screening, to a transportation back to an earlier cinematic culture. As Giovanna Fossati formulates it in Chapter 28 of this volume, film as performance is a useful framework for exhibiting these archival films. I would add that the layered temporality of the "present" of performance in an archival screening gives even more depth to the virtual time travel of cinematic experience.[11]

I will now analyze these moments of reflexivity in the moving images of early cinema and the screening of the images in the installation. Both address in their own way the changing relationship between spectator and (urban) space. They each do this through, on, and by means of the screen. This centrality of the screen brings up the question of the relationship between spectator, screen, and image. A particularly useful concept to investigate this relationship is *deixis*. I propose the concept of deixis to probe the way mobility and space-making work through the address to and solicitation of the spectator on multiple levels of the screening situation: the image on screen, the positioning of the screen, and the evocation of spatial and temporal mobility exemplary of screening early cinema in a contemporary context.

Deixis is a term borrowed from linguistics to explain how language is context-dependent. In fact, as Émile Benveniste has argued, deixis and not reference is the essence of language.[12] Deictic words, or shifters, function as mobile focal points, often within an oppositional structure such as "here," implicitly opposed to "there." Deixis indicates the relative meaning of the utterance, tied to the situation of utterance, an "I" in the "here" and "now." They have no fixed, referential meaning. Deixis establishes the point of origin, or deictic center, of the utterance: the "I" who speaks, as well as its point of arrival, the "you" who is spoken to. These terms are by definition mutually interchangeable. Moreover, or consequently, deixis frames the statement in temporal ("now") and spatial ("here") terms. Deixis helps set up the world to which the text relates. In contrast, for example, to nouns or adjectives, deictic words or shifters only have meaning in relation to the situation of utterance. Their meaning is produced through indication rather than reference – think of pointing. Personal pronouns of the first and second person – "I," "we," "you" – are shifters. But "he," "she," and "it" are not. The latter, although also in need of identities to fill them in, do not

change when the situation of utterance changes. But when *I* speak and *you* answer, *you* become *I*, and *I*, *you*. *She* remains the same, since both *I* and *you* know whom we are talking about. If we do not know who is speaking, the first and second person pronouns have no meaning. Similarly, we cannot *place* the meaning of such words as "over there" or "right here" if we don't know from where the speaker is speaking. Nor can we *time* the meaning of "yesterday" without a determined time frame.

I introduce these examples of shifters to suggest that time, place, and person are their primary anchors. Although the term was first introduced in linguistics, the perspective on the construction of space, time, and subjectivity is particularly useful for analyzing how the spectator is bound to the image. Hence, the "represented" images of, for example, the ride films that are central to my case here are not simply presented as from an internal point of view – a diegetic spectator – but also produce the subjectivity of the implied looker (the "I" doing the looking) as well as of the "I"'s "you," the second person who mutually constitutes and affirms the "I." A filmic image is what tells us "about," and thus constitutes a (fictionalizing) gaze that emerges through the inflection of the vista that invests it with subjectivity. This inflection can also be called focalization, a term from narrative theory that expresses this mediating and subjectivizing function, a visual equivalent of deixis.[13]

Ride Films and Deixis of the Image

Phantom rides are ride films shot from a first-person point of view – usually from the front of a moving vehicle. They were a typical attraction in early cinema which proved to have a lasting screen presence. The phantom ride's attraction is bound up with the deictic relationship between the camera, and hence the viewer, and the landscape. This is most important for an understanding of the films in their moment of cultural history. Through the device of the camera attached to the locomotive, the visual representation of landscape constitutes a truly shared environment. As a consequence, landscape does not stand on its own, as a geographical setting "out there"

only, but rather functions as a shifter between ways of life. It stands as the point of access to the "other" of modern and diverse culture.

In this sense landscape has a specific role in the representation of modernity, mediating the ideological nature vs. culture opposition strongly present in the culture. And as binary oppositions tend to do, they declare one of their terms positive, the other negative. But this valuation is fraught with ambivalence as the one becomes the attraction of the other. To put this more strongly, the representation of nature partakes of a specific representation of its negative, culture, and hence, is an oppositional representation of the urban. The terms of the binary couple nature/culture, or wild/urban, need each other. From the vantage point of the second term of the opposition – the one with which the viewer is aligned – the first term opens up to a spatial otherness, an elsewhere. This elsewhere, just like *elsewhen* and the cultural *Other*, only has meaning in an oppositional structure which, by means of the mapping of meaning through a shifter, organizes itself around the "I"/eye of the (urban) viewer that is its focal point.

Many travel films that include fictional characters play with this ambivalence of the traveler/spectator as being part of the landscape yet, inherently, also not part of it. Films like *A Romance of the Rail* (Edison, 1903), *The Hold-Up of the Rocky Mountain Express* (American Mutoscope & Biograph, 1906), and *A Railway Tragedy* (British Gaumont, 1904) combine footage from a train ride with romantic, comic, or dramatic scenes. *A Railway Tragedy* opens on the streets, at the arrival and departure of the train at the station, and ends with the train's arrival at another station. In this film, both trajectories – the non-fictional display of landscape and the fiction of the characters on the train with their urban point of departure – are literally intertwined by the insertion of views of passing landscape into the frames that show the interior of the train. As if they were traveling companions of the characters on screen, spectators can see the same view from the window, and they can also take a peek into the train compartment. The combination of shots and their modes of address sustain a fluid boundary between different fictional and non-fictional forms of address, providing shifting points of reference from "he"/"she" to "you" and, in the case of primary point of view, a phantom "I."

What the cinematic ride films and the mobile screen have in common is that they not only display but also constitute an experience of travel. Both deploy the imagery of travel to underscore the (new) medium's capacity as a virtual travel machine. The dynamic of travel as topic-trope-metaphor results in a mirror image when the medium *in* the image comes to stand for the mobility *of* the image. Such mirror images are synecdochs, where a part or detail stands for the whole. Specifically, they take the form of a *mise en abîme* – a figure where a detail not only stands for the whole, but is a summary or mirror-image of it.[14] This shift from a thematic to a metaphoric reflection of mobility is visible throughout the history of media. I refer in particular to those moments when physical mobility was first used to establish and demonstrate the virtual mobility of the medium. In early cinema, phantom rides are exemplary of this model of visual or virtual mobility. The screen, in this case, is the tool for movement through vision. The result of captured mobility refers back to the mobility-in-motion (the moment of shooting) and enables the spectator to travel back in time to the moment of this mobility.

Let me point out how mobility and visuality are tied together in travel imagery of early cinema to produce a space of mobility. This interest in mobility in the unbreakable bond of space and time in timespace as a trope of early moving images thus stems from the insight that (virtual) travel and transport are, precisely and intensely, both visual and narrative in their appeal, so much so that these two aspects can no longer be disentangled. Transport is an experience consisting of a temporal sequence of micro-events; of movement through space and of (resulting) encounters: a series of movements in time that appeal to the spectator's desire for immersion in space. It allows for "new ways of seeing."[15]

This new way of seeing is a temporally structured, at times immersive experience of visual engagement with new phenomena, environments, and people. These are all set, importantly, in space. The spatiotemporal imagery of travel thus establishes narrative as the twin or partner and not oppositional "other" of visual spectacle.

According to André Gaudreault, time, or *chronicity*, is the primary aspect of narrativity.[16] He distinguishes two levels of narration in moving images:

micro- and macro-narratives. This distinction is that one occurs on the level of the single shot and the other is created between shots by means of editing. The single shot – as micro-narrative – is the barest form of narration because it shows the passing of time that is *change* over time within the image. Spectacle, or attraction, can be regarded as things happening; things that have a direct effect on the spectator, drawing primary attention to themselves or, in temporal terms: happenings that punctuate the moment. In this view it makes sense to consider spectacles – attractions – as narrative, yet in a different time frame than the (longer) narratives that surround them.

At first sight, narrative is the account of the passing of time (and its results) outside the world of the spectator, whereas spectacle draws the engager-spectator into that world, from a grammatical third-person account to a first- and second-person interaction, as if by synchronizing watches: not in some other time, or *elsewhen*, but *right now*. This makes such spectacles, or narratives that are also spectacles, deictic, and sets them in the present tense. Nevertheless, if narratives can *also* be spectacles, this is because as concepts, narrative and spectacle are derived from different logics. Narrativity is constructed by means of interpretation, whereas spectacle is often conceptualized as an "effect," a forceful effect that takes the spectator out of an immersive diegesis and breaks through the narrative barrier.

Although this conception of narrative and spectacle as opposing forces seems to be clear-cut, disentangling their relationship is still on the agenda of media studies, whether as debate in the study of narration in moving images, in film history, or in the study of (digital) special effects. Problematically, this oppositional conception blinds us to the intricate connections between the two. These connections become prominent in mobility. When mobility predominates, the distinction between temporal and spatial constructions is no longer meaningful.[17]

The concept "cinema of attractions" as it was originally proposed makes this clear. Tom Gunning initiated a rehabilitation of visual attractions as belonging to a register different from but equal to narrative, in order to understand a mode of address that did not fit with (classical) narrative models.[18] Identification, suspense, and laughter are typical responses to

narrative which demonstrate the mechanism of what I would call a *heteropathic immersion*. The "pathos" of such immersion is "hetero" when viewing subjects go, as it were, out of themselves and make the leap to immerse themselves in the "other" field visible on the screen. The opposite would be an "idiopathic" immersion where the subject appropriates the image and absorbs it into his/her own world. The distinction as I propose it here is one between the off-screen world of the spectator and the on-screen events they engage with. Here, heteropathic means that the immersion takes place on the terrain of the diegesis, an elsewhere/elsewhen into which the spectator enters.[19]

Gunning draws attention to a different set of responses, such as a primary spectatorial confrontation, aesthetic fascination, and an appreciation for the novelty of "direct" cinematic imagery. These he sets off against the diegetic absorption that results from narration, the unfolding of a story. Gunning considers the phantom ride a key example of the cinema of attractions. He also proposes that its relative, the chase film, is the "original truly narrative genre," providing a synthesis of attractions and the linear logic of narrative editing. Both train and chase films rely on a primary narrative format of spatial mobility, but in a different way. The phantom ride shows this in a first-person perspective from a moving vehicle; the chase film "follows" characters traversing space. These generic formats show different perspectives on the experience of mobility: one invites a primary identification and the other binds the mobility to a third person. Both solicit a heteropathic immersion based on spectatorial transportation via the visual mobility on the screen.[20]

I would underscore this view and extend it for my purpose here, which is to clarify the new perspective on early cinema that contemporary media help provide us. As an exemplary trope in moving images, phantom rides constitute an *arche*-genre – let's call it a paradigm – that precedes and predicts, and is continuous with, contemporary screen-based ways of constituting ever-changing (media) spaces. As such, movement, especially that of the phantom ride's traveling camera, establishes a synthesis between narrative and spectacle. Gaudreault discerns micro-narratives in shots that show movement, using the example of the famous single-shot arriving train film *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat*. Following on from this, I will

propose below a temporary typology of train films as a way of thinking about contemporary screen-based relations to space. Together, these types demonstrate how movement as cinematic form reflexively embodies the ways in which narrative and attraction are essentially and inextricably tied together.

Foregrounding the intricacies of what some, perhaps, have tried too hard to disentangle, I argue that different types of train films function as visual motifs, in which both attraction and narrative can be discerned. It is primarily deixis that defines attraction; hence, through deixis, narrative can become (also) attraction. Let me use some examples from *Zoomscape*: *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat*, *Conway Castle*, and *Irish Mail*. Like any program, a (thematic) compilation program is a creative product of selection and collage. Similar to the exhibition practices of early cinema at its time, spectators are presented with a wide array of images, viewpoints, and attractions. In the *Zoomscape* program we see a representative sample of the variety of train images from the early period. Let us see how the spectator is deictically addressed by these images.

A first form is that of the arriving train. Perhaps the most canonical example is *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat*. Shot with a camera positioned on the platform, a train arrives and people step off while others board the train. A more dynamic – more clearly deictic – variant is the approaching-then-passing train film: the train moves toward the spectator, but passes on one side. An example of this is *Fast Mail, Northern Pacific Railroad* (Edison, 1897), not programmed in *Zoomscape*. In some cases the camera pans, following the train ride toward the distance. This produces the sensation of seeing something first being hurled at you, and the subsequent relief of seeing it as it misses you as the target, and watching it disappear into the distance. The physical sensation this can produce is evidence of the deictic nature of such ploys. This is what Gunning points out as the relationship between early cinema attractions of train rides and the visual spectacles of the fairground.[21] What they share is the visual-physical sensations of the roller coaster.

In another type, the phantom ride of *Conway Castle* shows a first-person perspective, tracking the perceptual field as seen from a moving train, without showing the train itself. While named after the castle that was a

popular tourist attraction, the film mainly shows the train track and the passing landscape. In the promotional text from the American Mutoscope & Biograph Company this is advertised as such: “Without a doubt this is the finest railroad moving picture ever made, and for variety and beauty of scenery it can hardly be surpassed the world over. This view is taken from the front of a rapidly moving locomotive, over a stretch of track made up of a continuous series of reverse curves; and every turn opens a vista of surpassing beauty. Conway Castle itself, one of the most picturesque and historic spots in Wales, appears from time to time in the picture.”[22]

Besides the tourist attraction of the film, the roller-coaster effect is very strong. The film consists entirely of a first-person perspective and follows the twists and turns of the track. The train also goes through a tunnel, and much like in a true phantom ride vision is temporarily suspended. The vista of the emerging landscape after the darkness of the tunnel in the colored print of the film is, still today, very spectacular in its effect. The spectator “lives” the moving perception, so that the phantom ride has become the measure of dynamic timespace. In deictic terms: the “I” is in the point of view that the spectator can adopt and from which the landscape is infused with meaning, and for whom the image has an effect. The deictic center is positioned by the camera perspective. *Conway Castle* is part of the Biograph 68mm collection that is mentioned in Giovanna Fossati’s contribution to this volume. Due to their wide gauge they have a particularly bright and sharp image. The spectacular visuals of the ride film are enhanced by the use of color, which is strikingly beautiful in this film.

These various train films each exemplify a different relationship between the screen and its spectators, ranging from static beholder to virtual passenger, as they experience space as dynamic. These categories of attractions, based on mobility and the perception of spatiotemporal deixis of this mobility, are irreducibly reflexive as they show *on* screen how we are to relate *to* the screen, in a troping of the train as vision machine.[23]

Figure 29.2 A shot from *Conway Castle* (British Mutoscope and Biograph, 1898). Courtesy of EYE Film Institute, Netherlands.

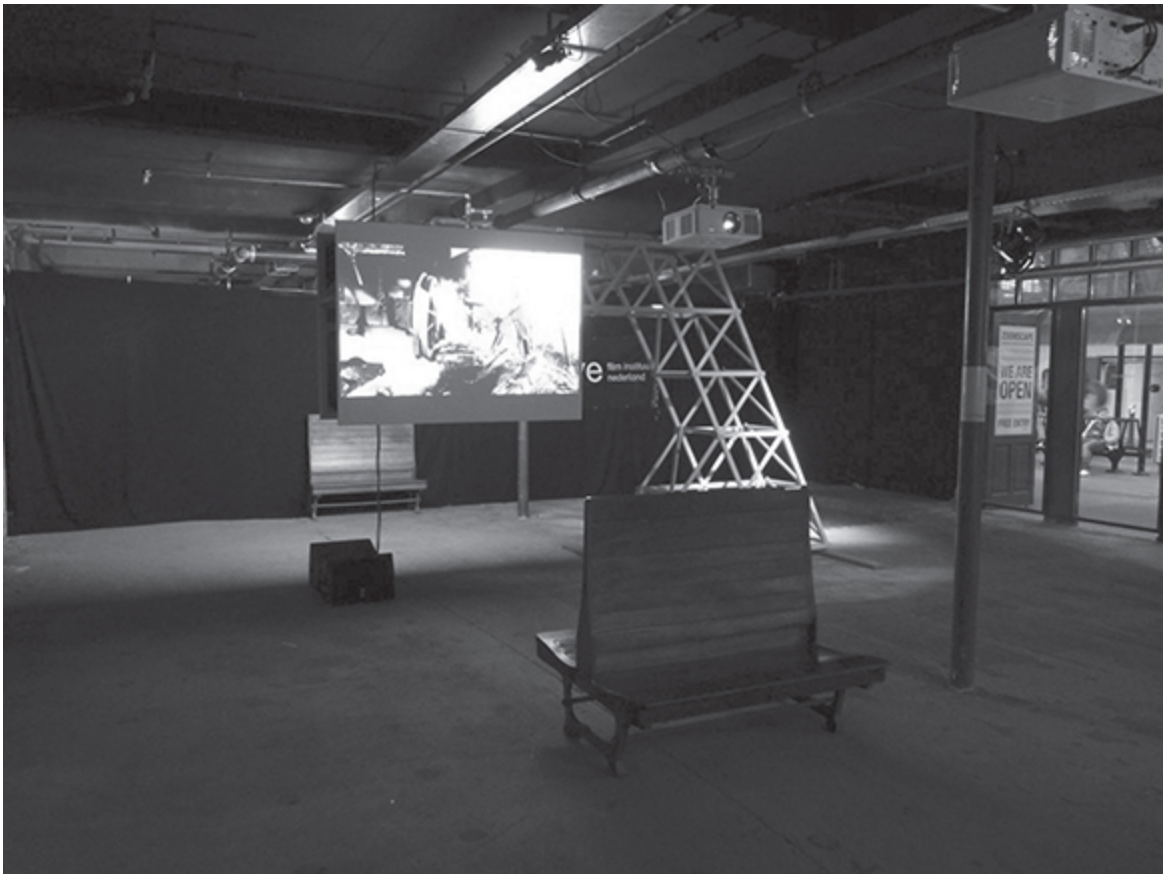
Placing Screens

Central to the construction of media as a travel machine is, then, the screen. Even if it can represent a temporal mediation, the screen is always also a spatial object, a tool for, but also part of, spatial transgression, hence, of mobility. The screen makes both the time of experience and diegetic time *spatial* – indeed, it is the locus of that transformation.

In early cinema, films were shown “in context” as well. The exhibition format of Hale’s Tours is an often-mentioned example of a traveling exhibition format that reflexively projected cinematic images in a train. When film was still predominantly a traveling medium and shows were held in temporary locations, the programs often included local “views” and possibly local people on screen. Also, news event films or actualities provided a strong deictic anchor between viewers within their locative and temporal context and the image on screen. I propose that these images even framed the other attractions on the screen with an emphatic “here” and “now” in their address of the spectator as “you” and, even if by extension and only as a possibility in most cases, an “I” as the spectator’s cinematic other. The difference of location-based screening then and now is, perhaps,

first and foremost the deictic complication of time, as in the case of these archival films. But contemporary screenings can also make use of this deictic aspect.

Figure 29.3 The entrance of *Zoomscape* at Amsterdam Central Station. The bulletin on the door says, “We are open.” Photo: Bert Kommerij, 2010.



The touring show *Crazy Cinématographe*, curated by Vanessa Toulmin (National Fairground Archive) and Nicole Dahlen and Claude Bertemes (Cinémathèque Luxembourg) in 2007, recreated for a contemporary audience early cinema’s traveling years as fairground attraction. The films were projected in a tent along with a cast of performers bringing back the tradition of the fairground shows. The program included titles from European film archives and featured many regional and location-specific titles. This screening turned the contemporary and local audience into the deictic “you” of the archival films.[24]

The space of the frame, established by the deixis of the image, is extended by the space of the screen. One is encapsulated within the other;

the virtual space on screen is *framed* by the external space of the screen. In the case of *Zoomscape*, we see how images of vehicular mobility or train travel become elements of cinema's virtual mobility, and are then thematically positioned within a (contemporary) paradigm of mobility – the metropolitan train station as place of transit *par excellence*. This layered mobility extends urban space.

When we look at the spatial arrangement of the installation, we notice the two-sided screen with train benches within an otherwise open space surrounding the screen, which allows people to walk around freely in the space. The open door has an inviting announcement addressing the passer-by/spectator in inclusive terms: "we are open" and "free admission." You/I can come in. "You are there for the ride" say the words written on the wall. The platform with arriving and departing trains in the background is the entrance and exit to the space. Location as the site of installation, as well as its spatial arrangement, emphasizes the dialectic of the medium and location, which is specific for so-called location-based screening. At the point of arriving and leaving, people can stop in their tracks and linger for a while in this space of virtual transport. The presence of the passing spectator is positioned both "here" within the image of the ride films and "here" as visitor to the exhibition space, in a spatial relationship to the screen.

Because of this deictically layered quality of the situation I propose to speak of "installation" rather than "exhibition." The latter term suggests one-directionality of presenting material to a recipient audience that is itself outside of the display. Moreover, exhibition is unspecific, while installation, in contrast, suggests location-specificity and the making of meaning through performativity. An installation is activating; "screening," in this case, is not a noun but a verb. Finally, an installation constitutes one "work," while an exhibition comprises many different works. Hence, the term installation is also meant to unify the event.

In *Zoomscape*, the set-up of the screen in the space at the station proposes a deictic operation outside of the frame of the cinematic image. The presence within the space is visible, if only because of the daylight coming in. People can walk around and even view the screen from both sides. The installation is there to *visit*, a space to walk around in, emphasizing the

spatiality of the installation as such. The screening of the films is spatially arranged and the screens are literally “installed” within the space. This accentuates the fact that the screening is a performance in a specific location, at a specific time, in the presence of spectators who are addressed and compelled to respond. The space where the films are shown is the site where the installation literally takes place. Moreover, the presence of the compilation program invites multiple perspectives. The archival footage, old images in a lively context of urban space where people pass through and possibly stay and sit for a while, creates a sensory domain of temporary presence. This, again, is a situation of installation rather than of exhibition.

Another example of contemporary screening in new contexts is the installation *Silent Films*, curated by Jennifer Peterson. This was a three-channel (digital) installation of early non-fiction films at *The Lab at Belmar* in Lakewood, Colorado in 2008. Three screens with images projected from the rear were hung at about eye level in an otherwise dark and empty space. They ran three separate programs of early non-fiction films – travel images, portraits, and industrial/labor imagery – from the collections of EYE, the Library of Congress, George Eastman House, and the British Film Institute. Each program ran at a slightly different length, so that as the programs looped continuously throughout the day, they were always in different synchronization. Many viewers described the pleasure of the installation to the curator as a puzzle of making associations between the three different images.[25]

This installation is another example of how the medium reflexivity of early cinema can return in contemporary screening practices, at the level of *compilation* (selecting and combining images), *relocation* (bringing the screen to new spatial contexts), and *installation* (spatial arrangement of the screen). The multiple screens looping compilations of films in this installation invoke the fragmentation of early cinema’s film programs by reframing this in a culture of “reusing and reinterpreting historical cultural objects” (as described by the curator in the program leaflet). It is a historical gesture, this installation; it not only brings the archival object to a new place of exhibition but also reframes the cultural viewing context, from the black box, a site of popular culture, to the white-cube gallery space, the conventional space for art. This is a reflexive move, even if I use the term

“popular culture” anachronistically, considering that, at the time of its making, the motivation for making this travel imagery was a part of attempts to elevate the cultural status of the medium. Not that this attempt at elevation had the effect, or the intent, of making the entertainment less “popular” in a broad sense: it remained a mass entertainment, slightly re-geared to the new white-collar working middle classes.

Contemporary installations integrate a thematic resonance in the choices made in the selection and compilation of the images, the specific location within which they are shown, and the spatial set-up of the screen(s). My examples here converge in demonstrating that screening makes for a performative situation. And, as I now wish to argue, the performativity of these situations requires deixis. Alison Butler suggests as much when she makes use of the specific notion of deixis in theatrical performance to describe film and video screening in gallery spaces as a “theatricalization”: “The defining role of deixis in theatre arises from the fact that performances, unlike films, actualize meaning in relation to concrete spatiotemporal contexts shared with their audiences. To describe gallery films as deictic in a theatrical sense, then, is to suggest that the ‘theatricalization’ of film in the gallery complicates spectatorship, dividing attention between screen space and screening space and subjecting the spectator’s qualified belief in the cinematic illusion to continual – spatial, temporal and discursive – modulation.”[26] The complication of spectatorship is precisely what makes these “gallery films” appropriate for reflexive statements. The selection, relocation, and subsequent installation of (archival) early films is a deictic operation. Placing screens for a performative event, then, entails the installation of deixis.

Looking Forward: Archival Presence in Deictic Time

Whether historical resonance and wonder (Greenblatt)[27] or recognition and excess (Casetti)[28] dominate film experience in these exhibition formats, a similar dual structure makes those experiences possible. This is the dualism

of the I/you structure. Spectators are hailed by means of deictic address, while simultaneously being given the opportunity to save themselves by shrinking back when the train rushes by. The contemporary screening of archival films is not a nostalgic practice of showing images of the past in new context, but it is one that takes as its starting point performativity, as a profound present and presence of pastness.

In the age of digitization the index as a trace of pastness has been endowed with a specifically nostalgic imago, in the case of the photographic image in particular. The analog photograph as a literal imprint of light ontologically "proves" spatiotemporal reality and thus provides the image with "authenticity," yet also with material decay. Due to the alleged ontological loss of indexicality with digital photography the photograph no longer functions as visual evidence of the literal imprint of reality (i.e., the rays of light on a sensitive surface). Digital photography has allegedly lost the direct connection between reality and image, or perhaps better, we have lost faith in it. But instead of deploring or celebrating this difference, I prefer to stay with the semiotic working of the index as sign in the making of meaning.

To understand the nature of this semiotic functioning of indexicality (or the indexicality of semiosis), we can look to a distinction proposed by Mary Ann Doane. In her contribution to a special issue of *differences* on the index, Doane brings together two very different characteristics of the index that we can discern in Charles S. Peirce's writings: its deictic directionality and the temporality of the index as trace. She problematizes the issue of authenticity by proposing a dialectic of these two sides to indexicality: the implied temporality of the index as imprint (what Barthes calls the "this-has-been" of photography) and as indicator: "look here." This indication has a very forceful presence, if not present. In Peirce's own words: "[T]he sign signifies its object solely by virtue of being really connected with it. Of this nature are all natural signs and physical symptoms. I call such a sign an *index*, a pointing finger being the type of the class. The index asserts nothing; it only says 'There!' It takes hold of our eyes, as it were, and forcibly directs them to a particular object, and there it stops. Demonstrative and relative pronouns are nearly pure indices, because they denote things without describing them."[29]

I seek to implement the temporal aspect of this distinction by considering indexicality as trace, on the one hand, and deixis on the other, in semiotic, not ontological terms. The trace is a sign of pastness from which the present cannot disentangle itself. The analog photograph of an object that was once placed before the lens would be a prime instance of such a trace. Deixis signifies the situatedness of the image in the present of its emergence: the "here" in "here was the object" of the photograph – the here which positions the spectator in relation to the image. This is the here that constitutes presence and positions relationality.

The trace and deixis are not mutually exclusive but operate dialectically, framing the present and presence of the image. Working together, however, the pastness as an absolute is unhinged: the situatedness of the image in its emergence is shifted to the situatedness of its presence. The pastness the trace carries is carried over into a bond with the present moment. This is why history remains important: the past is not detached from the present but, bound to it by deixis, informs and thickens it. In light of navigation with (screen-based) mobile devices, I call this bond between trace and deixis a destination-index, a trace toward the future.[30] But perhaps it is a two-way trace: one that inscribes in our present moment of experience a double temporality.

Alison Butler via Warren Buckland points out how deixis is brought to the fore in screening as a live *event*.[31] According to Butler, this is particularly clear in the case of site-specific screenings of films: "In the conventionalized setting of the cinema the deictic potential of the cinematic image is minimized, but once prised from its institutional home the cinematic image discloses its brazen link with the local and the distant."[32] Bringing together the trace in deixis is the historical act of *Zoomscape*. The distinction between the index from the past – the trace – and the index in the present – deixis – is mobilized and its two temporalities are brought into touch with each other whenever the archival or historical becomes an experience in the present. This temporal deixis points to a time with which we have some sort of continuity.

In designing this presentation of the museum's archive in the city's public space, the programmers of *Zoomscape* clearly sought to do something more

specific than the general goal of drawing attention to their archive in a larger public space by exhibiting and reframing the collection for the sake of archival "visibility" alone. They focused their program specifically on films from early cinema which, more than simply being in the movement of the then-new moving image, thematically *represent* movement. This is not simply a topic chosen among many equivalent ones. I argue that, instead, transportation is not only a main preoccupation of many early films in terms of thematic content, or a simple congruence between the moving image and the movement of people, but also a characteristic of the culture of early cinema as such. Both location specificity (the meaning of "place") and mobility (movement and the trope of transformation) are also primary preoccupations of today's visual culture. It is this dual track, so to speak, at the intersection of transportation and transformation, that has led me to look at early cinema in the *Zoomscape* film program and its location at a railway station as a structural, rather than only a thematic, doubling. The focus on the past is, then, as much a focus on the present. The two cultures meet in the common interest of the two eras in the locomotivity so omnipresent in the two moments.

This common ground between early cinema and contemporary screening installations has two consequences for the methodology of media history. I suggest here that such coincidences alert us to a bi-directionality in history. It draws attention to the forward-looking impulse in any new media development as paired, and inextricably intertwined, with a looking backwards to the medium from which the new development distinguishes itself. The desire to innovate comes inevitably with the desire to build on, and thus stay connected with, what came before. Indeed, history writing itself is a search for a gaze upon the past relevant for the time of writing. The publication of the present volume offers testimony of this.

Notes

1 These lines were written on the walls of the exhibition space at the station that I take as my point of departure in this chapter. These lines, as well as the title for the program, *Zoomscape*, are inspired by Mitchell Schwarzer's 2003 book of the same title on architecture and the moving

image. Many thanks to Anna Abrahams, project manager for experimental programming, EYE Film Netherlands, for giving me background information about the project.

2 The *Bits & Pieces* collection of EYE is unique in its kind, and consists of unidentified fragments that the archive finds beautiful and enchanting enough to not only preserve but also exhibit, in spite of, or perhaps because of their "incomplete" status. About this collection and the question of archival poetics, see Nanna Verhoeff, *After the Beginning: The West in Early Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), in particular chapter B, "Bits & Pieces."

3 From the program description, EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2010. Text revised slightly.

4 Among the scholars who studied the trope of mobility in relation to turn-of-the-century culture and the shock of modernity are Lynne Kirby, who writes about the cinema as "mechanic double" for the train; Ben Singer on cinema and the sensations of modernity; and Lauren Rabinovitz on the perceptual experience of travel, in particular in the case of Hale's Tours. Rabinovitz also argues for a lineage between early cinema's phantom rides and modern ride films. Stephen Bottomore provides a thorough analysis of the so-called "train effect" and the myth of the early cinema audiences panicking by watching approaching trains. Tom Gunning examines the relationship between cinematic visuality and the culture of modernity and positions the phantom ride as emblematic of early cinema as a cinema of attractions. See Lynn Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Lauren Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure: Women, Movies and Culture in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998); and "From *Hale's Tours* to *Star Tours*: Virtual Voyages and the Delirium of the Hyper-Real," *Iris* 25 (1998): 133–52; Stephen Bottomore, "The Panicking Audience: Early Cinema and the 'Train Effect'," *Historical Journal of Radio, Film and Television* 19, no. 2 (1999): 177–216; Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-

Garde," in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, eds. Thomas Elsaesser with Adam Barker (London: BFi Publishing, 1990), 56–62.

5 Janet H. Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 103.

6 See Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (1968; repr., London: Heinemann, 1972).

7 I speak of a visual regime of navigation that emerges with the advent of cinematic visuality and is transformed by the interactive possibilities of digital interfaces that emerge in the following century. This genealogy is not a strict and limited chronology. The navigational mode of viewing (in the very active sense) is also present in preceding machines for visuality, such as the painted Panorama and its spin-offs and Wittgensteinian relatives, and has a transforming persistence in our contemporary moment marked by mobile screens, locative media, and urban screens (cf. Nanna Verhoeff, *Mobile Screens: The Visual Regime of Navigation* [Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012]).

8 Verhoeff, *After the Beginning*.

9 This predictive quality lies at the heart of some art-historical work as well; see Michael Ann Holly, *Past Looking: Historical Imagination and the Rhetoric of the Image* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

10 Mary Ann Doane, "The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18, no. 1 (2007): 131.

11 On the cinematic experience as a negotiation of both recognition and excess, see Francesco Casetti, "Filmic Experience," *Screen* 50, no. 1 (2009): 56–66. Casetti writes: "Indeed, filmic experience is arguably both that moment when images (and sounds) on a screen arrogantly engage our senses and also that moment when they trigger a comprehension that concerns, reflexively, what we are viewing and the very fact of viewing it" (56). While I cannot elaborate here on the qualities of experience itself, Casetti's conception of experience as both immersive and contemplative resonates with my point in this essay about reflexivity on the one hand and deictic address on the other.

12 Émile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971).

13 For an excellent overview of the ins and outs of deixis, see Stephen C. Levinson, “Deixis,” in *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, ed. Laurence R. Horn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 97–121. Levinson considers deixis as coextensive with indexicality, which he considers a larger category of contextual dependency, and reserves deixis for linguistic aspects of indexicality (97–8). I will return below to the deictic quality of certain forms of indexicality, specifically in relation to the index as trace, when considering the specifically layered temporality at work in the screening of early cinema today. On the topic of focalization, see Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

14 See Lucien Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text*, trans. Jeremy Whiteley with Emma Hughes (1977; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

15 Brooks Landon, *The Aesthetics of Ambivalence: Rethinking Science Fiction Film in the Age of Electronic (Re)Production* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 94. Scott Bukatman quotes Landon when he summarizes his argument concerning the affects of special effects in science fiction cinema that go beyond narrative in “The Artificial Infinite: On Special Effects and the Sublime,” in *Alien Zone II: The Spaces of Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. Annette Kuhn (New York: Verso, 1999), 254. The phrase “ways of seeing” alludes to John Berger’s book with that title.

16 André Gaudreault, “Film, Narrative, Narration: The Cinema of the Lumière Brothers,” in Elsaesser and Barker, *Early Cinema*, 114–22.

17 This view of narrative and attraction as different but not opposing categories is put forward as well in Frank Kessler, “The Cinema of Attractions as *Dispositif*,” in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 57–69. Kessler argues that there is no exclusive opposition between narration and attraction, as attractions can be narrativized. That is why, according to him, one should distinguish, rather, between modes of address and functions in terms of narrative integration versus attractional display.

18 Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions.”

19 For the link between the cinema of attractions and contemporary screen culture, see Strauven, *Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*. I borrow the

qualifier “heteropathic” – but not its specific meaning – from Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

20 On the chase film as proto-genre in early cinema, see Tom Gunning, “Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity: A Theory of Genres in Early Film,” *Iris* 2, no. 1 (1984): 100–12; and Jonathan Auerbach, “Chasing Film Narrative: Repetition, Recursion, and the Body in Early Cinema,” *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (2000): 798–820. On early cinema’s train films, phantom rides, chase films, and the relationship between genres based on (Wittgensteinian) family resemblances, see Verhoeff, *After the Beginning*.

21 Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions,” 58.

22 Reprinted in Richard Brown and Barry Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise: The History of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1897–1915* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1999), 251.

23 For background to this terminology see Jean-Louis Comolli, “Machines of the Visible,” in *Electronic Culture: Technology and Visual Representation*, ed. Timothy Druckrey (1971; repr., New York: Aperture, 1996), 108–17. Comolli positions cinema not as (strict) technology but as a cultural *dispositif*: “It was necessary that something else be constituted, that something else be formed: the *cinema machine*, which is not essentially the camera, the film, the projector, which is not merely a combination of instruments, apparatuses, techniques. Which is a machine: a *dispositif* articulating between different sets – technological certainly, but also economic and ideological” (108, emphasis in original). In line with this, Maaike Bleeker approaches theater as a critical vision machine in *Visuality in the Theatre: The Locus of Looking* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

24 The show was organized as a public event to accompany the academic conference *Traveling Cinema* held at the University of Trier. For the proceedings see Martin Loipedinger, ed., *Travelling Cinema in Europe: Sources and Perspectives* (Frankfurt: Stroemfeld, 2008).

25 Many thanks to Jennifer Peterson for providing background information on this installation.

26 Alison Butler, “A Deictic Turn: Space and Location in Contemporary Gallery Film and Video Installation,” *Screen* 51, no. 4 (2010): 311.

27 Stephen Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 42–56.

28 Casetti, “Filmic Experience.”

29 Charles S. Peirce, “On the Algebra of Logic: A Contribution to the Philosophy of Notation,” *American Journal of Mathematics* 7 (1885): 180–202. Reprinted in *The Writings of Charles S. Peirce. A Chronological Edition*, vol. 5, *1884–1886*, ed. The Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 181.

30 Verhoeff, *Mobile Screens*.

31 Warren Buckland, *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 68–70.

32 Butler, “A Deictic Turn,” 310.

30

Is Nothing New?

Turn-of-the-Century Epistemes in Film History

Thomas Elsaesser

Epistemes 1900/2000: Nothing is New …

We are told that nothing is new. Out of the ancient zoetrope, or wheel of life, was evolved the gyroscope.… Half a century or so later, Mr. Edison produced his Kinetoscope – a band of progressive pictures passing before the eye applied to an optical peep-hole, and creating the effect of life and motion. During the Indian Exhibition last year, Mr. R. W. Paul, a clever electrical engineer of Hatton Garden, made and exhibited the kinetoscopes there, and noticing the rush for these marvellous machines, he wondered if their fascinating pictures could be reproduced on a screen, so that thousands might see them at one time.… Briefly explained, the whole thing amounts to this: Hundreds of photographs are taken with amazing rapidity – say, twenty a second – on an enormous length of celluloid ribbon. The photos are subsequently shown, magic-lantern fashion, also with extreme rapidity, the result being "living pictures" which completely baffle description; they *must* be seen to be appreciated.[1]

Among the many contemporary accounts testifying to the impact first made by moving pictures, this eyewitness report of Robert Paul's demonstration at the Finsbury Technical College on February 20, 1896 can serve as a useful pretext for reopening the debate about the historiography of "early cinema," and in particular, the place of the cinema around "1900," when looked at from around "2000." If "1900" has become a distinct "episteme," especially when framed within our present historical moment of "2000,"[2] then the most evident reasons are not the round numbers *per se*. Rather, each year can stand metaphorically for a "turn": that is, they mark the "beginning" of a momentous media change, as well as an "end" or *fin de siècle* of a particular worldview, signifying rupture and revolution, while in other respects showing many features of continuity and evolution. For the existence of such a turn – intuitively felt and demonstrably experienced by their respective contemporaries, yet also "misunderstood," i.e., interpreted in very different ways – the two dates offer many telling and seductively teasing parallels: the mood of wildly optimistic speculation side by side with dystopian confusion; the sense of convergence of very heterogeneous phenomena in a single moment, device, or technology (1900: the Cinématographe and moving pictures; 2000: digitization and the web); bursts of dynamism and economic activity, but also the feeling among the effervescence that *nothing was new*, and that the "bubble" was bound to burst (for early cinema: the "chaser" theory, the 1903 "crisis"; for digital media: the dotcom era).

The *Strand* account opens up this discussion for several reasons. First, because it shows that cinema was as much understood as the *continuation of existing devices*, aligning itself with an evolving technology of vision and spectacle, as it was hailed as a breakthrough. Second, by mentioning the "clever electrical engineer" R. W. Paul, the writer highlights the crucial role of one of those (many) pioneers, usually overlooked in the clash of the titans Thomas A. Edison and the Lumière brothers over who can claim to have "invented" the cinema.[3] Third, the passage is a reminder of the cinema's uncertain but productively promiscuous cultural status: a sensationalist fairground for some, and a scientific instrument to others. Paul's Theatrograph first demonstrated at a colonial exhibition and then at a technical college, before being exploited as urban mass entertainment,

bridged the not yet existing gap between "science," "education," and "entertainment." No parting of the ways yet, between a cinematic apparatus producing and propagating scientific "knowledge" for the good of humankind (or its obverse, for more efficiently killing men in warfare) and an apparatus offering illusionist spectacles that delight the eye, yet are also apt to provoke crises of ocular verification ("baffle description"). Finally, the statement that these "living pictures … *must* be seen to be believed" will prove a prescient prediction for many of the subsequent discussions of the cinema, situated as it then was (and once more is) between truth and trust, realism and simulation, or perhaps more simply between knowledge of the world and belief – or make-believe – in the world.

The *Strand* passage, like Maxim Gorky's famous "Last night I was in the Kingdom of Shadows" article,[4] is also a reminder of the excitement that greeted the "invention" in some parts of the globe.[5] By investing the simple act of movement with such immediacy, and the physical world with such preternatural presence and expressive animation, this enigmatic and yet inconspicuous device appeared to possess taboo-breaking powers over life and death. Its deeply paradoxical nature and impossibly utopian aspirations were furthermore locked into the various names given to the new apparatus: Cinémato-graphe, Kineto-scope, Bio-graph, Vita-scope, animato-graph: the script of life as the perception of motion. The conjuncture of "writing" (graphein) and "movement" (kinesis), of "seeing" (skopein) and "life" (zoe, bios, vita), accurately maps the semantic fields around which cluster not just mid- and late nineteenth-century obsessions, but an equally contemporary need at the beginning of the twenty-first century to redefine what is inscription, trace, and writing in relation to the body, the senses, with regards to consciousness and memory, and how these technologies of "vision," "movement," and "presence" connect to "life," "energy," "bio-power," and the *élan vital*.

It is worth noting that "kinesis" in Greek connotes not only movement, but also "the activity of an organism in response to a stimulus such as light," and is thus close to "photosynthesis," as one of the most fundamental life-giving principles of certain organisms. This associates motion pictures with other more directly light-seeking or light-emitting phenomena. It reminds us of the different conceptions of motion and energy, which in the

late nineteenth century shape the experience of (regular) movement and (linear) propulsion. But kinesis also already makes room for solenoid cells and cathode ray tubes, while nonetheless conjuring up ideas about transmission, about transport and transformation, about circular motion translated into forward thrust (in steam railways), and up-and-down movement producing rotation (in the combustion engine), with both thrust and rotation employed in the construction of this apparatus that emulated in equal measure the sewing machine, the telegraph ticker-tape, and the machine gun. These new physics of energy conversion joined up with a mode of writing, where natural phenomena "inscribe" themselves as images and visualized processes, without the intervention of the human hand or eye, as implied by William Henry Fox Talbot when he named photography the "pencil of nature," and as manifest in Jules-Étienne Marey's experiments in recording motion, pulse, and heartbeat in the form of graphic traces.

A century later, our cultural histories of the cinema, now increasingly reformulated under the overwhelming impact of the digital, are also unsure if and where to locate the epistemic break, or to assume that, indeed, *nothing is new*: is the digital image a *radical rupture*? Does it signal the death of cinema? Or does it amount to a mere *continuation* of mechanically produced images by other means? If around 1900 practitioners of the kinematograph still felt no need to decide between staging actualities and displaying scenic views, between telling stories and performing visual gags, between recording medical experiments and assisting the military, between developing prostheses for the hard-of-hearing and optimizing athletic performances, then the internet similarly combines the functions of the newspaper and the post office with those of book publishing and the library, all the while providing (or "emulating") many of the services previously supplied by the "old" audiovisual media of information, communication, and entertainment: radio, gramophone, television, telephony – and, of course, the cinema.

Yet when trying to redefine the cinema in the digital age, we still oscillate, as did those who a hundred years ago played with the different metaphors, when confidently or tentatively naming this new apparatus: whether thinking of cinema as the script of life in the form of *index* and

trace, i.e., as an analog medium with a capacity to function as a language, or celebrating it for its *liveness*, *immediacy*, and *presence*, i.e., as bursts of magic, "special effects," and attractions that "must be seen to be believed." In this respect, digital media enlarge this early cinema problem of "language" (-graph) versus "life" (bio-) versus "vision" (-scope) by raising the issue of "visualizing data" across an even broader front of (invisible) phenomena, (life-like) processes, and (abstract) patterns. Thus continuing what began more than a century ago with mechanical image capture, digital imaging has become an indispensable tool for scientific research, in fields as far apart as medicine and astronomy, ballistics and climatology. In the *Strand* passage quoted, the reference to chronophotography points backwards to the 1880s and to Eadweard Muybridge, but when read today, it also points forward to the remarkable revival of interest in the work of Marey. As mentioned above, this French scientist has once more become important, not merely because he tried to record movement in order to analyze its phases and stages, and not even because he managed to store time itself, but because he was one of the first to think about this problem of visualizing data in the form of "processes" or "becomings," by constructing for the capture of this data all manner of graphic – including, but not limited to, photographic – devices.[6] We recognize in him today's scientific and social demand for visualizing magnitudes of abstract data in pictorial and graphic form, but also "scalable" and in "real time," and thus in "movement," i.e., in both motion *and* mutation.

Commentators on the cinema from around 1896 looked back to predecessors, but rarely without also trying to predict the future: flights of fancy, dark dystopias, panics, and prophecies belong as much to the historical moment as the more temperate technical descriptions and the confident genealogies of progress and perfectibility. Going even further than Gorky, writers managed to extrapolate from the initial impact of the kinematograph a surprisingly clear idea about the broader cultural field, seeing future developments in motion pictures not in isolation, nor as merely transforming vision and affecting perception. Some highlighted quite accurately what we now consider integral aspects of the cinema's subsequent history as a cultural phenomenon, which includes sound, but also global transmission, instantaneity of reception, and even the specter of

total surveillance: “All of this is wondrous and miraculous, and in its movement is life itself. The only thing missing are the noises and the voice, the phonograph. People dream of it, Edison works on it. And when the convergence has come about which combines the kinematograph, phonograph, cathode ray tubes, telescope, telegraph and all the other graphs that are sure to come, nothing will be left to hide, there will be no more distance, and no temporal delay.”[7]

This historical experience of amazed anticipation and anticipated amazement, this musing over life’s simulacra and the death of distance, this awareness that a powerful combination of technologies was about to be put in service not just for recording, transmitting, and storing “life,” but also for simultaneity, mobility, and visual control, has more than anecdotal value. It confirms the epistemic parallels between then and now, because our present situation finds itself uncannily described and thereby also defamiliarized across such a voice of world-weary wonderment, coming to us like a time-traveler from a long-gone past. Together with the quotation from the *Strand*, it illustrates why it is so tempting to see “1900” as the most consistently illuminating matrix for comprehending the media change we are currently undergoing. Nevertheless, however inescapable the recognition of a shared sense of epochal shift may be, the awareness that we might be living merely through a phase change rather than a radical break is also quite sobering. The possibility that we are caught in a repetition and a “return” of a much larger wave pattern in human evolution must surely mitigate against too much hype about the revolutionary nature of the present – especially when our present is seen from an “anthropological” perspective as well as a technological one. It counsels skepticism as to the “newness” of the new media while providing a buffer zone of stoical acceptance, which we can shore up against the anxieties and uncertainties that always accompany periods of rapid change.

Pre-cinema, Para-cinema, Proto-cinema

Positing 1900/2000 as distinct epistemes, and identifying them respectively with the shift to “motion pictures” and “digital images,” necessarily foreshortens in each case several related and intertwined “prehistories.” For instance, in the field of cinema studies, the various parallels, anticipations, and echo-effects linking the periods between, say, 1870–1900 and 1970–2000 have been highlighted and continue to be elaborated by what is variously known as the “new film history,” “early cinema studies,” “revisionist film historiography,” “media archaeology,” and “visual culture studies.” These new fields of research have not always opened up because of digitization: the sense of a “turn” or a “return” in film studies, emerging as it did in the late 1970s and early 1980s, predated both the personal computer and the internet.

Yet as the number of projects and research initiatives setting out to explore the complex media landscape of the late nineteenth century from today’s perspective proliferates, so have the problems of nomenclature and the boundary disputes between film studies, cinema history, art history, and image anthropology. For instance, the arrival of “digital cinema” – for many, still a contradiction in terms – has thrown into doubt the very definition of “what cinema is,” and it has rendered diffuse any single point of origin, any linear path of influence or causal chains that confidently prescribe particular trajectories or ascribe specific goals to either film or the cinema. Conversely, while this favors more open-ended, non-teleological accounts of the cinema’s past as well as its “future,” it also blurs the basis for meaningful definitions and distinctions. Thus, the more vibrant the research examining the double conjuncture 1900/2000 through detailed case studies has become, the more difficult it is to specify the epistemological grounds on which the comparisons are being made.[8] Debates have begun to take shape around the implicit foundations, hidden tautologies, and warranted or unwarranted assumptions which underpin the enterprise of understanding the cinema across its multiple and intersecting nineteenth-century genealogies. One can see why some scholars prefer to accept the “death of cinema,” rather than rephrase its origins and function in terms of such widely used but loosely defined notions as “scopic regimes,” “visuality,” or “the cinema of attractions,” in the attempt to rescue the cinema in and for the digital age. “Modernity,” “cinema and the invention

of modern life": these and similar locutions continue to do duty as conceptual anchors, but are they merely the "sky hooks" necessary to bridge the respective indices of perceptual, sensory, and neurological transformation, bringing them under a common denominator, such as "history of vision," while having to ignore the difficulties of doing so?[9]

It is therefore time to take stock, and in particular, to ask what manner of change and continuity, what forms of agency and determination, what modes of transitions and transformations were at work over the past hundred-odd years – in short, what kinds of historiography can help us understand the cinema in the twentieth century, while giving us some guidance for its survival in the twenty-first.[10] Disclosing an interest, I undertake this retrospect not altogether as an outside observer, but also with a view to better understand my own involvement, as well as the issues that I used to think were at stake. These come under the following headings: first, *what was the initial impulse and urgency of this research into early and pre-cinema?* Second, in order to serve as a template for mapping post-filmic cinema, *how does the idea of early cinema as a distinct but possibly recurring episteme affect our view of film and cinema having a history at all?* And third, *how can the widening gap between "film" and "cinema" be bridged, and by extension, do we need an altogether different paradigm to reconcile the dual nature of cinema as trace of time (a "script of life") and simulacrum of reality (a "form of life"), with which I opened this discussion?*

Early Cinema: "Nitrate Can't Wait" and the Policy of the Archive and the Festival

In trying to answer the first question – what has lain behind the impulse toward early cinema studies since the mid-1970s – I see apparently opposed impulses coming together: an urgent need on the part of film archivists to rescue the physical remains of the first twenty years of cinema ("Nitrate

won’t wait”) and, among many of the first generation of film scholars, a sense of frustration or fatigue with a turn in film theory whose main conceptual framework – the highly sophisticated elaboration of the “cinematic apparatus” – remained stubbornly ahistorical and even counter-factual. If one adds a third constituency, namely the North American filmmaking avant-garde, some of whose theorists and practitioners (Noël Burch, Jay Leyda, Ken Jacobs, Hollis Frampton, Michael Snow) had always been on the look-out for a pedigree that was not simply anti-Hollywood, but predated classical Hollywood and the narrative fiction film, then it seems little short of miraculous that these very different needs and agendas found so many common platforms and theoretical positions around a new-found love of pre-World War I films, i.e., predating the great masters of film art during the silent period.

The story of how archivists, supported by a handful of film scholars at an International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) meeting in Brighton in May 1978, managed to raise public awareness and genuine enthusiasm for early films has been told several times, without losing either its inherent improbability or its retrospective inevitability, when one adds the number of bold festival organizers, mostly in Italy, seconded by historians of both “old” and “new” film history, who were soon joined by avant-garde specialists from New York and elsewhere. This movement didn’t only produce the intellectually coherent discourses by acknowledged experts and scholars that legitimized the efforts of FIAF, eventually generating a minimum of governmental funding to help preserve the endangered heritage of nitrate-based film.[11] The confluence of serendipity and necessity, of theory and practice, of showing and preserving can itself stand as an emblem for the contradictory–complementary dynamic which animated early cinema studies and continues to radiate as it promises to refashion not just the first decades, but the first hundred years of cinema – and beyond. Success for this rescue action was also assisted by the “archive” emerging (among art historians, philosophers, and new media scholars) as an intellectual trope that redefined a collection as an active resource and a political tool.[12] While in Europe the audiovisual heritage was elevated to an instrument of national identity-formation, serving tourism and local pride, and across film festivals, becoming a priority in cultural politics, in

the United States it was the commercial potential of film libraries that began to be recognized and exploited, before collectors, academics, and artists rallied round the scraps and "orphans" of film history.[13] In all these cases, the increasing use of film and photography to support heritage, cultural memory, and acts of commemoration hints at the importance of images and sounds in determining not just the "medium," but the "content" of history for future generations.[14]

Thanks initially to the Pordenone and Bologna festivals, there is now access to the holdings of film archives, and each year's festivals boast newly restored films, once more projected on the big screen. Film historians were finally able to establish and personally verify crucial "facts" about the first twenty years of cinema, often substantially revising the traditional accounts of the grand masters of film history, such as Jean Mitry, Georges Sadoul, Jerzy Toeplitz, and William K. Everson. These men had tended to dismiss this period for being primitive, childish, and unworthy of being called an art, not least because so little was available for close inspection, but also because their priorities lay elsewhere. It soon became evident that many such judgments, and the chronologies derived from them, were based on historiographic models – organic models of growth and decay, cyclical models of realism versus fantasy – that were inadequate, contradictory, and often flawed.[15] Several basic assumptions came under scrutiny and proved to be in need of revision: for instance, that film history was the history of individual films; that the development of cinema had been in the direction of manifesting the cinema's specificity as an art form – and thus attaining only in the 1920s the kind of aesthetic reflexivity we associate with high modernism. Or the contrary assumption, that cinema has always been progressing toward greater and greater "realism," that is to say following the direction taken by the low mimetic arts and by popular media culture. Both these competing teleologies are now generally viewed as problematic, an insight no doubt helped by the more general recognition that the fierce debate around the division between high culture ("art") and mass media ("commerce") has itself become obsolete.

Especially the idea that the *drive for realism* determined the logic of cinema's history – from silent to sound, from sound to color, from color to

wide-screen (this was intended not only to support a linear progress model, but was also invoked to explain why the cinema became a narrative medium) – had to be abandoned in the light of the "new film history." When scholars began to combine the written evidence about early cinema with what they saw on the screen, their understanding of the "development" of cinema became considerably more complicated, notably with respect to *sound* and *color*, *medium specificity*, *narrative* and *photography*: early films were rarely silent, and the technology of sound synchronization was already very sophisticated by around 1906.[16] Many of the films were not in black and white, but stenciled, tinted, or toned, which is to say, "in color." Once one appreciated the sophistication in staging, the handling of space, the choreography of movement, or the many cultural and topical references in film from around 1900, it became clear that (high modernist) "reflexivity" and (low mimetic) "realism" had never been opposite poles. New theories of "intermediality" and "hybridity," of "media intertexts," "crossover," and "remediation" came to bridge the gap, becoming the default values for film content or genres migrating across "platforms" in the digital media.[17]

Likewise, the identification of cinema as a storytelling medium, and thus the emergence of "narrative," pointed to different determining factors, having to do as much with demographics, with struggles over control and institutional power as with aesthetics, the legacy of the realist novel or the cinema's manifest destiny.[18] First avant-garde cinema in the 1970s, then post-classical cinema in the 1980s, and eventually digital cinema challenged the primacy of narrative: each phase gave a boost to the mounting evidence that showed how early cinema had developed a whole range of non-narrative but nonetheless popular genres, leading to the widespread adoption of the term "cinema of attractions" in order to characterize an aesthetics of presentation and display (as opposed to representation and narrative integration). It also led to identifying the whole period of early cinema as "cinema of attraction," and beyond that to making it the name for a transhistorical mode, sometimes "dominant" and sometimes "recessive," in analogy to genetics and evolution.[19] Finally, reversing the historical telescope once more, the extraordinary resurgence of *animation* in digital cinema through Disney, Pixar, and DreamWorks

blockbusters (as well as online) helped refocus film historians' awareness of the rich history of animation throughout the twentieth century, which had been neglected (or recessive) in comparison with the live action feature film, but which offered a more or less smooth transition from photographic to digital modes while providing the latter with a respectable and aesthetically rich pedigree reaching back into early cinema and even pre-cinema.

Revisionist Historiographies

These apparent analogies raised the usual questions of what in historical research counts as evidence, i.e., how legitimate is it to project our own preoccupations onto the past, or how selective can we be when drawing such parallels? It also posed, with respect to the written sources on early cinema, the problem of how accurate they are, in the sense not only of promoting and advertising these new "attractions," but also in describing them "objectively." Hyperbole often ruled the day, among the boosters as well as the detractors. How representative is the relatively small sample of the films that, thanks to the efforts made, has survived? How can we craft plausible explanations of audiences, their viewing habits and pleasures, from the scarce records left in newspapers and company archives – especially considering that much of this evidence comes from sources professionally hostile to the cinema: educational reformers, temperance societies, and literary authors who, faced with competition from moving pictures, feared for their livelihood?

The broadly revisionist approach to cinema history, which took hold in the field from the mid-1980s onwards, may have agreed that "the received wisdom has to be challenged bit by bit, every piece of information has to be checked, re-checked and if necessary, revised";[20] there was, however, less consensus about the historiographic implications that might follow. Was it merely a matter of reevaluating the available evidence? Was it a matter of bringing new kinds of evidence to bear? Or was an even more radical approach necessary that did not try simply to fill in the gaps in our knowledge, but began to regard the gaps as meaningful in themselves

(because they prompted questions about institutional power and its effects on the state of knowledge)? Why, for instance, was the knowledge about sound and color in early cinema repressed for so long? Why did industry-standard sound film take so long to "mature," and how did "the talkies" eventually come about, once one accepts that its invention, recognition as innovation, and normative implementation must be treated as separate processes? Why did color disappear in the early 1920s and not reappear until the late 1930s: was it due to economic factors, technical issues, or aesthetic prejudice?[21] Many of the standard features we now associate with cinema besides color photography or synchronized sound, such as 3D or safety film, were "discovered" well before they were adopted by the film industry or became the "norm" and "good practice." Solving technical problems was no guarantee that these might be implemented. Too many other variables, from cost factors to patent rights, from monopolistic exploitation of a specific market to trying to gain a competitive edge over a rival, came into play as "determinants"; they required broader explanatory schemes of how the cinema came about, or demanded more sophisticated models to account for its rapid changes in the first fifteen years, and why these were followed by much slower transformations in subsequent decades. More generally, such asynchronicities suggested even more fundamental questions about the "delay of cinema," an issue already raised by André Bazin: why were projected moving pictures so long in the making, when most of the necessary scientific principles had been known for some fifty years prior?[22]

What became increasingly clear, in any event, was that *no inevitable logic about the development of the cinema* could be derived from either the basic technology (chronophotography, projection) of moving images, or the physiological effects on spectators (persistence of vision/illusion of motion). Powerful social forces had to be present, and their impact would prove to be contradictory. For instance, instead of assuming the relentless progress, popularity, and thus inevitability of motion pictures, could it be the case that some of the great minds of the nineteenth century were busy imagining vision machines and communication technologies other than those based on photography, but on electrons and photons? And what if the public had been led to expect a different media revolution – perhaps around

the telephone or the telegraph? The cartoonists and satirists drawing for the popular magazines of the time certainly seemed to think so.[23] For the film historian such evidence suggested that in addition to the history of what *had been* the case, there should be due consideration of the histories of what *might have been* the case, or at least a positive awareness of apparent dead-ends and paths not taken. While some gaps in our knowledge can and should be filled,[24] others need to be highlighted precisely as gaps, in order to become telling evidence: I have called this the "dog that did not bark" forensics of film history.[25] Likewise, what seemed a dead-end around 1900 (stereoscopy, for instance) could reveal itself prescient and pioneering a hundred years later, making the "losers" of yesterday the forebears of the "winners" of tomorrow.

Evidently, such rethinking of early cinema and proto-cinematic practices runs counter to any linear conception of cause and effect. But it broadens the range of possible causal factors while also suggesting that retrospective revision, rewriting, omission, or even repression – whether for ideological, aesthetic, or economic reasons – inevitably inflects historians' work: in order to produce an orderly account of film history at all, they often have to "select" quite drastically. It confirmed that it does not make sense to speak of "progress" as the overall dynamic of this history, nor does the evidence support the notion that humankind had always been dreaming of the cinema. On the contrary, a *historiography of unintended consequences* is almost as plausible as the more orthodox idea of *an invention whose time had come* when one is trying to account for the enigma of cinema's "multiple discovery" (also known as "evolutionary epistemology"), i.e., the fact that various individuals in different parts of the world seemed to have been working on similar devices for capturing movement, reproducing it photographically, and making it public by means of projection.[26]

Beginnings, Becomings, and Fateful Divisions

Thus, the first major achievement of the "revisionist" approach to film history has been a rich, but also confusingly complex and at times contested account of the so-called beginnings. The different names, dates, devices, and applications associated with the "invention of cinema" necessitate the conclusion that *the cinema has far too many* and seemingly incompatible points of origins in the nineteenth century, *for there to be a single "history,"* however we decide to conceive its trajectory or deconstruct its teleology.[27] Consider how unstable were the minimal conditions that eventually led to exactly dating the cinema's invention: chronophotography was a precursor, but did not itself qualify as cinema, even though Georges Demenÿ's modifications put him "ahead" of the rest, at least in Europe, while in the United States, the Latham family's Panoptikon, Francis Jenkins and Thomas Armat's Phantoscope, as well as William K. Dickson all showed projected motion pictures (some to a paying audience) during 1895; the Skladanowsky brothers' Bioskop performance, because it showed their films on twin projectors, was disregarded, even though their performance before a paying audience preceded that of the Lumière brothers. Why was Émile Reynaud's Théâtre optique, using a strip of paper with painted images projected onto a screen, not good enough as the "birth" of cinema, considering the subsequent importance of animated film? Why should only images taken with a camera and fixed on celluloid qualify, now that we have digitally produced images? Why not Edison's peephole Kinetoscope, instead of the Lumières' (later and, some would argue, derivative) Cinématographe, adapted from Paul's Theatrographe? Why did it make a difference whether these films were first shown to a scientific community or a paying public?

The decision that only the latter audience finally counted as relevant is testimony to a fundamental split, unknown in 1895, but coming later, possibly after World War I: the rigorous division between the entertainment and non-entertainment uses of the cinematic apparatus. As a result, probably more than a third of all recorded images on celluloid (be they for scientific, military, instructional, or industrial purposes) dropped out of film history – until the 1980s, when early cinema studies began to look at all types of film that had survived. To this was added the awareness of just how decisive warfare and surveillance had become in developing the basic

technologies of cinema (and digital media).[28] It led to a veritable archival renaissance: borne by collectors, artists, and aficionados, it generated a groundswell of conservationist love and respect for "home movies," "orphans of the cinema," "industrial films," "found footage," and "second-hand films."[29] In the light of such revisionism, the four or five different qualifiers that were necessary to make December 28, 1895 the date and the Lumière brothers the "inventors" of cinema now seem even more arbitrary and self-interested. It is not as though the Cinématographe did not deserve the pride of place it occupies in any account of the history of cinema, if only because the name the Lumières gave to their machine – among the many other names – is the one that was almost universally adopted or translated into other languages. The Cinématographe was also in many ways technically superior to its predecessors and competitors, and its major features were quickly adopted or copied by everyone else. But as the now established chronologies demonstrate, if one wants to retain the Lumières as the true begetters of cinema, one had better either abandon the criterion of "firsts" or move their "first" to the earlier, non-paying event, on March 22, 1895, when Louis Lumière gave a talk, which he illustrated with *Sortie d'usine* (*Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*), at the Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale in Paris. One had also better add to their achievements the remarkably international infrastructure already put in place by their father, thanks to the success of their previous "invention," the fast emulsion photographic plates which they manufactured in Lyon but distributed and sold almost all over the world – a network of local distributors ready for use when it came to propagating the Cinématographe.

The mention of R. W. Paul, as the inventor from whom Antoine Lumière acquired the machine that his sons adapted, draws attention to the role that globalization, piracy, and "reverse-engineering" already played in the 1890s.[30] But the "engineer of Hatton Garden" also stands for forces larger than himself: Paul, and his associate Birt Acres, despite their science background, also had contact with the more sensationalist sides of spiritist photographic séances, a fact that usefully evokes the long history of the phantasmagoria and "embodied vision," which have become of special interest to historians of visual culture,[31] as well as to artists such as Zoe

Beloff. Here, too, our contemporary interest in “embodiment,” and our experience of images that immerse the spectator, rather than come to us via the rectangle of a delimited screen, favor the “rediscovery” or “recovery” of other genealogies of the cinema, ones that had previously been discarded or downplayed as too close to the fairground to be “art” and too much geared to special effects to be a realist medium.

Against Convergence: The Cinema Does Not (Yet) Exist

One of the payoffs for all these complications of origins is that it puts up for inspection the implicit criteria historians have applied when charting the development of cinema as “convergence.” For instance, traditional histories contain parameters that may appear essential and fixed at a certain point in time, but turn out to be much more relative and variable: from today’s perspective, the idea of grounding the origins of the cinema in the confluence of *photography*, *projection*, and “*persistence of vision*” is no longer self-evident or necessary. Instead, it reveals a specific historical, technical, and aesthetic bias (as well as ignorance about human perception). It makes it plain that cinema history has been written not only from hindsight, but with some very particular preferences embedded, which later proved to have been too restrictive to serve as a comprehensive history: not only are photography and projection no longer necessary conditions of “cinema”; as immersive experiences such as IMAX or 3D as well as interactive environments, such as computer games, have become increasingly associated with the modern cinema experience, so too will the phantasmagoria of the eighteenth century or the stereoscopic views of the nineteenth century seem increasingly legitimate “precursors” of cinema – as indicated by the renewed interest in their technical and institutional, but also cultural and aesthetic, histories.[32]

There is another advantage to the multiple lines of descent of the basic technology, along with the many optical toys (Zoetrope, Mutoscope, stereoscope) and public entertainments involving moving images (magic

lantern shows, Pepper's Ghost, Kaiser-Panoramas) that historians of the cinema are now aware of: they remind us that *for the first decade, there was no such thing as the "cinema*." The name was not uniform and there did not exist in most countries the institutional or industrial frameworks for producing, distributing, or exhibiting "living pictures" in a uniform way. Often a lawless, fly-by-night, one-man business, it took entrepreneurs from other branches of popular entertainment, such as Gaumont, the Pathé brothers, Paul Davidson, Lyman Howe, Eugene Cline, and many others, to make of the moving picture invention a profitable business and of the business an industry. Traveling theaters were as common as fixed sites, and even these could be as different as a variety theater, an emptied out store, or a bar.[33] It took over a decade before films became standardized products in length or subject matter, and almost another before the format of an individual performance – whether made up of a film program composed of individual shorts or "numbers" or consisting of a main feature film – had stabilized around a reliable set of expectations which could be provided to patrons on a regular basis to create the habit we know as "going to the movies."

Why are these seemingly arcane aspects of early cinema still important to scholars? They confirm that histories of the cinema are hard to write, whatever aspect one chooses to concentrate on: major films and directors, technical innovations, audiences, or national cinemas, stars and genres, artistic movements, and "new waves." None will be able to specify the "essence" of the cinema, and all will have weak causal chains to link them over time into a coherent sequence. Hence the paradigmatic role that early cinema has played in this revival of film history on so many fronts: by studying the dynamics of the different constituents of what became the "institution cinema" at the points of formation and crystallization, and at close range, across different countries, over a relatively brief period of time, patterns of interaction appeared which proved useful in establishing "early cinema" as a kind of template. Tracking the form, function, and genres of short films during the early period, for instance, not only helped to understand how and under what circumstances the longer narrative film emerged and established itself as the norm; it also offered valuable insight into the "return" of short films, such as one can observe in a very different

medium but under comparable circumstances on YouTube. It revives the early cinema practice of "programming," of talking back, and of direct address to the audience.[34] Similar "returns," as we saw above, can be charted for animated film, or for the revival of interest in non-fiction film of all kinds, whether in the form of video installations, mash-ups, or found footage compilations. A film history that had, with the phasing out of celluloid-based photography, seemed closed and complete – so much so that lamenting the "death of cinema" had become a commonplace – has opened up again, because the very definition of "what is cinema" has once more been called into question, and become the subject of passionate debate. "Too many origins" would seem to translate into "more returns and new becomings," just as "no single point of origin" holds out the promise that the cinema may know multiple "destinies." After the "total work of art" as the ideal of the 1920s, and "realism" as the *telos* of the 1930s, perfect illusion that of the 1940s, and – in Europe – the return to realism as "disclosure" since the 1950s, it is now "immediacy" and "simultaneity," "interactivity" and "presence" that compete for pride of place among desirable goals.

Film History or Cinema History

This leaves an important issue I want briefly to consider, and to which I alluded earlier when asking on what grounds the comparisons between "early cinema" and contemporary digital media can be made pertinent. The issue, in short, is how to grasp at a conceptual level the object that is supposed to have a history, or on the contrary, eludes all histories, because "it has not yet been invented."[35]

I have already mentioned that one of the factors which kept the interest in early cinema, its "prehistories," "origins," and "parallel histories" a vital issue, beyond the crisis of preservation and archival custodianship, was the intellectual ferment in the 1980s around film studies as it embraced (or extended itself to embrace) cultural studies. The powerful paradigms coming from structuralism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis had reshaped the way moving pictures were understood, but the synthesis, by the mid-1970s,

of much of this work in the form of apparatus theory, gendered subject position, and interpellation also raised many questions as to the plausibility and historical evidence for such totalizing and all-encompassing theorems. Once one had a look at the films themselves, many of these claims did not hold up: what was up there on the screen was just too effervescent, too enigmatic as well as too expert, too assured in its otherness from what the theories would have predicted. Furthermore, within this intellectual conjunction, the work of Michel Foucault had particular impact, since it explicitly promised to give ideological critique a precise historical grounding. Whereas it is possible to see semiotic and psychoanalytic film theory as text-based and thus still beholden to a hermeneutics derived from literature (the host discipline of most film studies until then), Foucault's emphasis on institutions, on the fact that it is power (rather than meaning) that is embedded in language, while practice may function as regulatory and normative discourse, also offered film studies new directions, new energy and self-definition.

Parallel to Foucault's influence on Noël Burch, for instance, who was a key figure in laying the theoretical groundwork for early cinema studies,[36] a number of film historians began to challenge, from the mid-1970s onwards, the kind of linear film history that concentrated on "firsts," on lone pioneers, "eureka" moments, and "masterpieces." They began to study instead the prehistory of cinema in such venues as music halls, burlesque and vaudeville theaters, concentrating on the physical sites of spectacle and their role in the urban fabric as well as on the economics and logistics of exhibition. This original research bore fruit in Charles Musser's and Robert C. Allen's work on exhibition patterns and the defining power of programming. It found its polemical edge in 1984 when Allen (in a book co-authored with Douglas Gomery) famously declared that for much of what can be considered the pressing questions in film history, it was neither necessary nor desirable to actually watch films.[37]

Thus, one of the most obvious characteristics of the "new film history" in the 1980s was, precisely, that it was *no longer film history*, but *cinema history* – concerned with the institutional emergence and internal organization of the different branches of the film industry; with the age, class, and gender demographics of the audience; with the screenplay as

blueprint for production schedules and the division of labor; with the physical spaces of spectatorship, i.e., cinema architecture; but also with the locating of cinemas in residential or commercial neighborhoods; and with much else besides.[38]

But to put "film" on one side and "cinema" on the other would be too neat a distinction. One of the first publications to have "early cinema" in its title was actually an attempt to get historians of (the institution) cinema to enter into dialogue with the historians of film (-form), not least in order to break up the division between narrative and anti-narrative factions in film studies and the avant-garde by trying to reorient the (historical) grounds on which we could begin to explain the cinema's turn to narrative, a turn that most film historians had taken for granted and as being inevitable. Hence its subtitle "Frame, Space, Narrative," and its division into sections on "Film Form: Articulations of Space and Time," "The Institution Cinema: Industry, Commodity, Audiences," and "The Continuity System: Narration, Continuity-Discontinuity-Alternation, European Alternatives to the Classical Paradigm."[39]

Two of the strongest voices to emerge from this debate over narrative in the volume were those of Musser and Tom Gunning: both with roots in the avant-garde and both formidable in their knowledge of early cinema, not least because they were students of Annette Michelson and Jay Leyda, as well as familiar with the work of Noël Burch, who shuttled between Paris and New York and bridged the gap between theory and practice, but who was also a partisan on the side of anti-narrative and the avant-garde. What is revealing about the debate between Musser and Gunning (which has continued over the decades)[40] is not just how complex and nuanced, but also at first glance how paradoxical their respective positions are: Musser, who argues for the primacy of "screen practice," and – with his detailed studies of exhibition and programming – would seem to be firmly on the side of cinema history, is nonetheless a staunch defender of "narrative" as an organizing principle even for early cinema – not at the level of the individual film, but with respect to the overall experience of the audience, thanks to the programming skills and the "control" of the exhibitor. Gunning, on the other hand, whose book on Griffith elaborates one of the

most sophisticated accounts for the rise of narrative as the outcome of several compromise formations (rather than as the cinema's destiny), argues against narrative as the default value of early cinema, yet he does so generally on the basis of a close and detailed study of the films themselves, their formal characteristics, as well as the presumed reactions of the audience. The paradox is thus that Gunning, giving priority to film form, would here be the *film* historian, but *a-narrative*, while Musser, prioritizing the programming context, would be the *cinema* historian but insist on being *proto-narrative*.

One could add to this that André Gaudreault – a collaborator of and occasional co-author with Gunning in those years – has added valuable knowledge to Musser's argument, with his work on the *bonimenteur* or film lecturer, an instance of "narrative integration" in the context of early cinema exhibition. All three, I imagine, would consider themselves cinema historians, yet they would insist, *contra* Allen and Gomery, on the value of closely studying films. Evidently, I am simplifying these positions to draw attention to the intricacy of the factors in play when attending to the "birth" of narrative cinema, but it does underscore how much *theory* (aesthetics, epistemology, hermeneutics) is at issue in questions of *history*, and how much historical detail may be required to have an informed view of a theoretical issue – in this case the emergence of "film narrative."

With the profusion of platforms on which we are now accustomed to watching films, some *film* scholars have insisted that what makes a film a film is that it is shown in a *cinema*, further complicating the question of what kind of history the cinema can have, if any. Aware of all possible surfaces – from IMAX screens that envelop us and eliminate the boundary of the frame (and thus the off-screen space so crucial to classical mise en scène), to screens on hand-held devices so small that ambient space and light constantly intrude – they insist that it is analogue images on celluloid, shown in a darkened space with raked seating, that constitutes the subject of film history. Cinema is the proper term for the moving image, with the frame edges clearly marked, projecting a two-dimensional image that gives the aesthetic illusion of depth of field, and not, for instance, a 3D film that requires special glasses to be perceived. Dudley Andrew puts the case polemically: "Not every roll of photographed celluloid belongs to the

category ‘cinema’ as it makes sense to me to define it. Naturally, it is all a matter of definition. So let me be forthright: the cinema came into its own around 1910 and it began to doubt its constitution sometime in the late 1980s.”[41] Excluded from cinema, in other words, are much of what I am calling here the episteme 1900 and the episteme 2000, or “early cinema” and “digital cinema,” and moot are all the possible parallels I have been carefully constructing and deconstructing between these two periods of accelerated change. What remains of *cinema* is the supposedly stable middle part, and there, above all, the *films* of the great masters of cinema. In other words, a set of – to some limiting, to others enabling – conditions is required to forge a new link between film and cinema and vice versa, whereby the cinema is now defined as a particular public place, usually selling tickets to separate performances. It is made up of an architectural ensemble which projects moving images onto a large screen, and whose images usually constitute a film that tells a story. Although on the face of it not an unreasonable and maybe even a pragmatic definition of the cinema, the limiting conditions it implies (just like the ones that set the birthdate of the cinema) are designed to draw boundaries that keep at bay scientific films, industrial films, training films, military tests, or medical experiments recorded on film. The reasons these boundaries have become necessary, however, are the mutations filmmaking has undergone in the past thirty years, and while, by default, they risk marginalizing documentaries, animation, or “abstract” films from every period, they are designed to raise the bar also for the admittance of digital cinema; or, at the very least, they mean to put it in quarantine for the time being.

The Cinema is Always Complete

Is there a way around this conundrum of the *cinéphile*, who would rather consent to the “death” of cinema than have it bastardized by digital technologies and hybridized by films being shown on all manner of unsuitable surfaces and in all kinds of unseemly places? I sincerely hope so, but rather than make any specific suggestions in this direction, I want to put forward, by way of conclusion, an equally pragmatic set of definitions that sees films and cinema as distinct, while nonetheless keeping in mind that

ultimately they belong together. When speaking of film, for instance, it is worth pointing out that it can analyze movement or synthesize it, that it can be used to record and document the material world, as it presents itself to this particular optical apparatus. But film also allows for the possibility that something has been created solely for the purpose that the apparatus record it, giving it the illusion of being material and real. Might it therefore be possible to say the moving image has many histories, not all of which belong to the cinema (but may well belong to film)? Conversely, much belongs to the history of cinema that does not involve actual films: on the one hand, exhibitors make their money out of selling soft drinks and other concessions (for which the films act as bait), and on the other hand, "going to the movies" is something people decide on, as part of their social life, often before they have settled on any particular kind of film. Put like this, the film/cinema distinction raises questions of a different nature: does the cinema provide goods or services? Do we pay for a product or an experience? And what is it that is being bought and sold, i.e., "commodified," in such a transaction: our time and our attention, our subjectivity, or our mind, our body, and the senses?

The emphasis on spectatorship in film studies over the past thirty years, where such questions have been tied to the politics of representation, can be presumed to have favored cinema history over film history. But this would be to overlook that in the academic context, close attention to texts has always been a non-negotiable given, so that the shift to the spectator produced first of all "spectators in the text" and then "spectators through the text," leading to the already mentioned theories of subject positions and suture – precisely the kind of abstractions that new film history tried to get away from – without thereby getting that much closer necessarily to the "historical spectator."

Nonetheless, the *shift of emphasis from film history* (as the history of films) *to cinema history* (as the history of the interdependence of film form, film technology, institutional practices and discourses on one side, and audiences, demographics, and consumption on the other) did constitute a change in the overall object of study. It responded to the crisis of confidence in film-as-text, but it also helped to specify in concrete historical terms what was meant by the cinematic apparatus, which turned out not

only to be less monolithic and rigid than its theory (with its pedigree stretching back to Plato's parable of the cave, Alberti's central perspective, and Descartes's optics, all the way up to Lacan and Althusser) but also proved itself a more adaptable and thus more historically variable "*dispositif*."[42] If *dispositif* is indeed to be a useful term to describe the assemblage of heterogeneous elements that have to work together in order to produce certain effects we identify with the cinema, then it needs to be grasped as more mutable in both its constitutive elements (physical arrangement of space, absence or presence of sound, mode of address from the screen or from the auditorium) and its effects (the capture of the spectator by illusionist make-believe, the affective and sensory interplay between spectator and screen, the "embodied" or haptic dimensions of the film experience). The new film history as *cinema history* opened filmmaking, filmviewing, and filmgoing to the wider sociocultural context, breaking with the argument of film-as-art as well as with its mirror obverse, film-as-ideology. As I have mentioned, it made cinema an integral part of the study of commodities, leisure, and consumption, a test case for cultural studies, as well as paradigmatic for other late nineteenth-century visual culture practices. From dioramas to world fairs, from wax museums to salon paintings, the cinema became crucial to a plethora of histories, cultures, and subcultures dealing with imaging technologies and mediated sensory perception across a vast and expanding spectrum. In the process, it complicated the question of "what is cinema" as well as making it even more unlikely that there would be agreement on what its "history" might be.

What then are the conclusions I can draw from the three questions I set out to examine? The answer to "why early cinema" is that it remains the privileged site where the issues of history and historiography intersect with matters of theory and method. The period requires an ecumenical approach, across case studies that can highlight the uniqueness of the moment as well as its salience for the situation as a whole. The example of early cinema suggests, as the ground-rule for studying the cinema of any period, including the present one, that at any given point in its history, the cinema *has always been in transition and transformation, as well as achieved and fully aware of itself*. In other words, if there is no "infancy" then there is no "maturity," and there can be no "death" because there was no "birth." From

its inceptions – as my opening section showed – the cinema was both a continuation of old media and the start of something new, and many of its potential functions and uses, suppressed or ignored for much of its history, may return, may be reinvented and reevaluated, as indeed has been the case in the past twenty years, as parallels, both profound and superficial, both structural and epiphenomenal have suggested themselves between earlier periods and the present, or have led us back to the past from the present. The answer to my second question, *how does the possibility of recurring epistemes affect our view of film and cinema having a history at all*, would then be that in place of a single master-narrative, or even multiple histories, we might do better to consider seriously that the cinema, as both episteme and symbolic form, obliges us to revise our idea of history, of agency, and causality, rather than conceding that cinema is now "history," having been superseded and marginalized by digital media.

As to my third question, *do we need an altogether different paradigm to reconcile cinema as trace of time and as form of life*, posing it as an issue may have to be our best answer. Theodor W. Adorno once wrote with reference to Kant and Hegel: "in the vulgar question of 'what Kant or Hegel still have to tell us today,' one encounters the arrogance of those who think that 'coming after' already gives one the right to put oneself above the dead. The possibility is not even raised that the proper question might be: 'how do we appear to Hegel?'"[43] Applied to the pioneers of what we now call "cinema," the question would be almost the same: "what can we tell them *now* that they did not know *then*?" And to have "even raised it" in my mind may have been what prompted these thoughts in the first place, leaving me with the hope that if the cinema cannot have a single history (and why it will continue to have many theories), it is because its many pasts contain – and have retained – too much that is present to ever surrender its presence.

Notes

1 "The Prince's Derby Shown by Lightning Photography," *Strand Magazine* 12 (July–December 1896), reproduced in *In the Kingdom of*

Shadows: A Companion to Early Cinema, eds. Colin Harding and Simon Popple (London: Cygnus Arts, 1996), 32.

2 For an explanation and justification of the "episteme 1900," see Annemone Ligensa and Klaus Kreimeier, eds., *Film 1900: Technology, Perception, Culture* (New Barnet: John Libbey, 2009); and François Albera and Maria Tortajada, *Cinema Beyond Film: Media Epistemology in the Modern Era* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

3 On the revival of scholarly and popular interest in Paul's role in British cinema, see the British Film Institute DVD *RW Paul: The Collected Films (1895–1908)* (2006).

4 I. M. Pacatus [Maxim Gorky], *Nizhegorodski listok*, July 4, 1896; reprinted as "A Review of the Lumière Program at the Nizhni-Novgorod Fair," in Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (New York: Collier, 1973), 407–9.

5 Response to the "invention" of "living pictures" varied widely in different countries. For Russia, see Yuri Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception* (New York: Routledge, 1994). For Europe generally, see Martin Loiperdinger, ed., *Travelling Cinema in Europe* (Frankfurt: Stroemfeld, 2008).

6 See, for instance, Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Étienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904)* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992); Michel Frizot, *Étienne-Jules Marey, chronophotographe* (Paris: Nathan, 2001); Laurent Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001); and Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

7 Louis de Meurville, *Le Gaulois*, February 12, 1896; quoted in Martina Müller's television feature *Cinématographe Lumière* (Westdeutsche Rundfunk-WDR, 1995).

8 Besides the Siegen research project, the period from roughly 1870 to 1910 (and its contemporary relevance) also informs the agenda of several other university based research projects: one in Lausanne (headed by François Albera and Maria Tortajada), one in Montreal (headed by André Gaudreault), and one in Amsterdam (coordinated by Michael Wedel, Wanda Strauven, and myself). It is close to the work done at Birkbeck

College (the “London Screen Study Project” initiated by Ian Christie) and it informs much of the research in the University of Chicago’s Cinema and Media Studies program (especially the work of Tom Gunning, Yuri Tsivian, James Lastra, and the late Miriam Hansen). Web resources also support such research, such as “Who’s Who of Victorian Cinema” (http://www.victorian-cinema.net/), the “Early Visual Media” website (http://users.telenet.be/thomasweynants/history.html), and the “Dead - Media Project” (http://www.deadmedia.org/). Similar projects are being pursued at the Universities of Utrecht, Trier, Bologna, Udine, and Weimar, not to mention the large number of scholars represented in Domitor, the “International Association Dedicated to the Study of Early Cinema.”

9 David Bordwell has challenged the notion that cinema changed perceptual habits, attacking the “history of vision” approach to cinema. See David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 141–3.

10 Such a need to take stock is shared by many scholars. Sean Cubitt’s *The Cinema Effect* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), Francesco Casetti’s *Eye of the Century: Film, Experience, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), and David Rodowick’s *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) have all tried to elaborate a coherent historical as well as conceptual framework within which to position the cinema at the threshold of its second century.

11 See Joanne L. Yeck, *Our Film Heritage* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997). Some of the reasons why this heritage is still endangered are given in Paolo Cherchi Usai’s *The Death of Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 2001). More melancholy accounts of what has already been lost can be found in Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade’s Gone By …* (London: Abacus, 1969); and Stephen Barber, *Abandoned Images: Film and Film’s End* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010).

12 See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); and Wolfgang Ernst, *Das Rumoren der Archive* (Berlin: Merve, 2002). For an overview, see Marlene Manoff, “Theories of the Archive from across the Disciplines,” *Libraries and the Academy* 4, no. 1 (January 2004): 9–25.

13 Such as the very successful biennial “Orphans of the Cinema” symposium, initiated and directed by Dan Streible at New York University.

14 More and more studies are inquiring into how individual images have come to shape our understanding of history. On the Farm Security Administration photos, see James Curtis, *Mind’s Eye, Mind’s Truth: FSA Photography Reconsidered* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); and Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). On the famous 1943 photo of the Warsaw ghetto boy, see Frédéric Rousseau, *L’enfant juif de Varsovie. Histoire d’une photographie* (Paris: Seuil, 2009); and Richard Raskin, *A Child At Gunpoint* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2004).

15 These, however, are verdicts themselves in need of revision. Rereading the seminal studies of Paul Rotha, Richard Griffith, and Lewis Jacobs, as well as the magisterial histories of Jacques Deslandes (for France) and Friedrich von Zglinicki (for Germany), one is impressed by how many details – and some of their judgments – have stood the test of time.

16 See, for example, Rick Altman’s *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); James Lastra’s *Sound Technologies and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); and Michael Wedel, *Der deutsche Musikfilm: Archäologie eines Genres 1914–1945* (Munich: text + kritik, 2007).

17 See André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, “Transécriture and Narrative Mediatics: The Stakes of Intermediality,” in *A Companion to Literature and Film*, eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 58–70; Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); and Jay D. Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

18 See Tom Gunning, “Weaving a Narrative: Style and Economic Background in Griffith’s Biograph Films,” 336–47; Charles Musser, “The Travel Genre in 1903–1904: Moving Towards Fictional Narrative,” 123–32; André Gaudreault, “Detours in Film Narrative: The Development of Cross-Cutting,” 133–52, all in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*,

eds. Thomas Elsaesser with Adam Barker (London: BFI Publishing, 1990).

19 For the history of the term “cinema of attractions,” see Wanda Strauven, ed., *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

20 Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 4.

21 One recalls the hostility of Hugo Münsterberg or Rudolf Arnheim to sound film, which retrospectively made the preceding decade “silent” or “mute” again in order to champion the cinema of the 1920s as “art.” For an account of the resistance to sound, see Sarah Kozloff, *Invisible Storytellers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 8–11.

22 André Bazin, “The Myth of Total Cinema,” in *What is Cinema?*, vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 23–7.

23 Among a number of figures, Albert Robida (1848–1926) stands out with his three dystopian-satirical books about the twentieth century: *Le vingtième siècle* (1883), *La guerre au vingtième siècle* (1887), and *Le vingtième siècle: la vie électrique* (1890). The most comprehensive account of cartoons on early cinema is to be found in Stephen Bottomore, *I Want to See This Annie Mattygraph: A Cartoon History of the Coming of the Movies* (Pordenone: Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, 1995).

24 See Richard Abel, who has documented how French films were gradually driven out of the North American market in *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

25 Thomas Elsaesser, “Early Film History and Multi-Media: An Archaeology of Possible Futures?,” in *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, eds. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas Keenan (New York: Routledge, 2006), 13–26.

26 On the question of multiple discoveries in science see Robert K. Merton and Elinor Barber, *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Susan Cozzens, *Social Control and Multiple Discovery in Science: The Opiate Receptor Case* (Buffalo: State University of New York Press, 1990). On “evolutionary epistemology” see Ahron Kantorovich, *Scientific Discovery: Logic and*

Tinkering (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); and Malcolm Gladwell, “In the Air,” *New Yorker*, May 12, 2008, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/05/12/080512fa_fact_gladwell .

27 The consensus is that one cannot talk of a “birth” of cinema, even if there is still an “official birthday” (December 28, 1895) which designates the Lumière brothers as the “parents.” Thanks to the work of Laurent Mannoni, Charles Musser, Deac Rossell, Martin Loiperdinger, and others it is now accepted that the cinema has too many “begetters,” “abortions,” and “siblings” for its origins and identity to add up to a single (linear) history.

28 For warfare and surveillance, see Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (London: Verso, 1989); Friedrich Kittler, *Draculas Vermächtnis* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1993); and virtually the entire film and installation output of Harun Farocki of the past twenty years.

29 See the studies by Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia Zimmerman, eds., *Mining the Home Movie* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Lisa Cartwright, *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine’s Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993); Christa Blümlinger, *Filme aus zweiter Hand* (Berlin: Vorwerk8, 2009); and Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau, *Films that Work* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

30 Since Edison had failed to patent his Kinetoscope in Britain, Paul built his own version, “improving” it in the process. One of these machines found its way to Lyon, where the Lumières undertook some more “reverse-engineering” and modification. Thus, “multiple discoveries” and patent registration are at issue as well. See Robert Pearson, “Early Cinema,” in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 13–23.

31 See Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

32 See Terry Castle's *The Female Thermometer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

33 For a first historical assessment of this phase, see Loiperdinger, *Travelling Cinema*. See, for instance, Teresa Rizzo, "YouTube – the New Cinema of Attractions," *Scan – Journal of Media Arts Culture* 5, no. 1 (2008), http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal_id=109; and Landon A. Palmer, "Movement 1.1: The Futures of Cinema," *Movement Journal* 1, no. 1 (n.d.), http://www.movementjournal.com/issue_1.1_futures_of_cinema/01_introduction.html.

34 The phrase is from Bazin, "The Myth," 21.

35 For a collection of some of Burch's seminal pieces, see Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

36 Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 38–42.

37 Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Richard Maltby, Melvyn Stokes, and Robert C. Allen, eds., *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007); and Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

38 Elsaesser, *Early Cinema*.

39 See Charles Musser, "Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7, no. 2 (1994): 203–32; and "A Cinema of Contemplation, A Cinema of Discernment: Spectatorship, Intertextuality and Attractions in the 1890s," in Strauven, *Cinema of Attractions*, 159–80.

40 Dudley Andrew, *What Cinema Is!* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), xiii.

41 For an important reassessment of the concept of the *dispositif*, see Albera and Tortajada, *Cinema beyond Film*.

42 T. W. Adorno, *Drei Studien zu Hegel* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963), 1.

Index

Abel, Richard
abstraction
  early
  gestural
Acres, Birt
Across the Brooklyn Bridge
acting
  early reviews on quality of
  film performance as
actors
  advertising of
  anonymity of
  listed by character
  and motoring
  named in catalogs
  portraits of
actualities *see* films, actuality
Addams, Jane
Ader, Clément
Adventures of Dollie
advertising
  circus style of
  controversies
  credits in
  first film
  gimmicks
  handbill
  of performers
  of plots and scenarios
  in the press
  producer attitudes to

storefront
aesthetic regimes
airdomes
Albera, François
Alberini, Filoteo
L’album magique
Alias Jimmy Valentine
Allen, Robert C.
Altenloh, Emilie
alteration format hybrids
Althusser, Louis
Altman, Rick
Ambrosio
American Mutoscope and Biograph (AM&B)
American Bioscope
Americanism, an education in
Amusement Hall
Andrew, Dudley
animated pictures
animation
Animatographe
anonymity
in early cinema
popular
apparatus
animation
of apperception
base (*appareil de base*)
cinematic
Cosmorama
disciplinary
kinematograph
of motography
peep show

projection
recording
theory
applause
Arcadia, Philadelphia
archival practice
frameworks of
theory of
archives
in deictic time
“nitrate won’t wait” problem of
pay per view
the policy of
Archives françaises du film
archivists
Armat, Thomas
Arnold, Matthew
Aron, Steve
arousal, optimal level of
L’arrivée d’un train à La Ciotat
L’arroseur arrosé
art
in early film
films as
modes of
and the national-popular (Italy)
regimes of
art cinema
L’assassinat du duc de Guise
Associated Press (AP)
athletes
in theater
attraction
and narrative

attractions
culture of
montage of
see also cinema of attractions
audiences
dualistic model of
ethnic and racial
for fairground films
film reception by
mass address of
Audion
audiovisual technology
Auerbach, Jonathan
authors
importance in Italy
literary
personae of
automobiles
avant-garde
Avenging a Crime: Or, Burned at the Stake
The Awakening of Bess
A Baby's Shoe
Bächlin, Peter
Baggot, King
Bara, Theda
Barnard, Charles
Baron, Auguste
Baroncelli, Jacques de
The Battle of Gettysburg
The Battle of Waterloo
Baudry, Jean-Louis
Baum, L. Frank
Bayley, Roger Child

Beckers, Alexander
Bedding, Thomas
Beelden voor de toekomst
Bell, Alexander Graham
Bell Telephone Laboratories
Bellamy, Edward
Bellour, Raymond
Ben Hur
Benjamin, Walter
Benoit-Lévy, Edmond
Benoit-Lévy, Georges
benshi
Berlin – Potsdamer Platz
Bernhardt, Sarah
Bernheim, Adrien
Bertini, Francesca
Beyond the Rocks
La biche au bois
A Big Swallow
billboards
Biograph
  advertising by
  brand of
  films
    by Griffith
  founding of
  “Girl” *see also* Lawrence, Florence
  leading gentlemen artists of
  leading lady artists of
  rivalry
    with Edison
    with Pathé
Bioskop
The Birth of a Nation

Bitzer, G. W.
Black Art
The Blacksmith's Daughter, A Complete Novel
Blackton, J. Stuart
Bland, Harold
Bloodhounds Tracking a Convict
Bogert, William R.
Booth, Maude Ballington
Les bords du Gange
Bordwell, David
Borelli, Lyda
Bosworth, Elsie Janis
Bosworth, Hobart
Bousquet, Henri
Box Office Television (BOTV)
Bradley, Milton
Branigan, Edward
Bressol, Pierre
Brewster, Ben
Brewster, David
Brise-glace en Finlande
Britain
  censorship in
British Film Institute (BFI)
British Gaumont
British Mutoscope and Biograph (BM&B)
broadcasting
  live
  satellite
Brooks, Peter
Brunel, Georges
Buckwalter, Harry
Bullfight

A Bunch of Violets
Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin and Koblenz
Burch, Noël
Burgess, Neil
Bush, W. Stephen
Butti, Enrico Annibale
By Whose Hands?
Cabiria
La Caduta di Troia
café-concerts
Calmettes, André
camera
  angles
  metaphorical function of
  negatives
  self-thinking
cameramen
Cameraphone
Cantomímes
Canudo, Ricciotto
Capellani, Albert
Carmen
Carter, Lincoln J.
Caruso, Enrico
Casetti, Francesco
Catalogue of Educational Moving Pictures
catalogues of film
catoptric machines
catoptric magic
celebrity, invention of
censorship
Le Cercle Funambulesque
chain drama

Chalmers, James P.
Chambre syndicale des fabricants et négociants de Cinématographes
Le Champignon, sa culture, sa croissance
Chaplin, Charlie
characters
  in film series
  naming of
Charles Urban Trading Company
chase films, American
chase scenes
Chased by Bloodhounds
Châtelet, Théâtre du
  féerie at
Chattanooga
Cherchi Usai, Paolo
Chestnut Street Opera House, Philadelphia
The Chicken Thief
The Child Stealers
children
  and advertising
  copycatting by
  education of
  films of
  shows for
Chomón, Segundo de
chronicity, and narrativity
Chronochrome
Chronophone
Chronophotograph
chronophotography
churches
  festivals of
  films shown in

Cinderella
Ciné-Journal
cinema
abstract
of attractions *see* cinema of attractions
avant-garde
centenary of
classical
color
convergence of
craft era of
definition of
digital
divergence from theater
double birth of
history of
Impressionist
invention of
and magic
as moral reformer
multiple discovery of
of narrative integration
as new industry
non-representational
oral
and pantomime
philosophical examination of
posters
production
artisan system
director system
publicity
pure
and modern pantomime
reading public of

second birth of
silent (muet)
as social threat
third birth of
transition
traveling
and vice
cinéma direct
Cinema Nôvo, Brazil
cinema of attractions
cinemas
introduction of
permanent
territories of
Cinémathèque de la Ville de Luxembourg
Cinémathèque Suisse
Cinematograf
cinematograph
fairground booths
presentational aspects of
street
Cinématographe
Lumière
posters for
Cinématoscope
Cineric Inc.
Cines
Claretie, Jules
Clarke, Jack
class, social
Cline, Eugene
The Closing Net
Coldwell, E. B.
Colette

Collins, Alf
color
  applied
  before World War I
  fading of
  heritage
  on lantern slides
  and Pathé-Frères
  preservation of
  restoration of
commedia dell'arte, tradition of
communication
  history
  remote
Comolli, Jean-Louis
conjuring
  and juggling
  optical
Conway Castle: Panoramic View of Conway on the L. & N. W. Railway
Cook & Harris Company, advertising by
copycatting, by children
copyright
Cosmorama
  prices of
  Rooms
Costello, Maurice
costume changes, film as cover for
Cottens, Victor de
A Country Cupid
The Country Fair
Crazy Cinématographe
credits
  retrospective
  screen

Cretinetti
criticism
independence of
language of
of poster styles
purpose of
representative of audience views
see also reviews
cultural optics
cultural series
Curtis, Edward S.
Dale, Ida Dudley
D’Ambra, Lucio
Damon, Ida
D’Annunzio, Gabriele
Dans les Pyrénées
Dans l’Hellade
Dante
Darlay, Victor
Darnley, Herbert
Davenport brothers
Davidson, Ella H.
Davidson, Paul
De Forest, Lee
De Forest Radio Telephone Company
De Lorme, Louis R.
Debureau, Charles
Debureau, Gaspard
A Decree of Destiny
Deed, André
deixis
of the image
semi-oral

Demenÿ, Georges
Dench, Ernest
Dermoz, Germaine
Desert Lily airdome
Desmet
  method
Diamant-Berger, Henri
Dickens, Charles
  adaptations of
Dickson, William K. L.
Digital Cinema Initiatives (DCI)
digital technology
Diorama
  Langenheim’s
Dircks, Henry
director
  stage
  system
  technical
dispositif
  see also apparatus
dissolving views
distribution coalitions
documentary
Dolesé, Ruth Gould
Domitor
Donaldson, stock text posters by
Doncières, René
Dove Eye’s Gratitude
Drew, Sidney
Drouais, F. H.
dubbing
  mimetic

Ducom, Jacques
Dulaar brothers
Dulac, Germaine
Dulac, Nicolas
Duncan, Isadora
DVD
  archive access via
Dyer, Frank
Eagle, Oscar
early cinema studies
Eastman Kodak
Eça de Queiroz, José Maria
Éclair
Éclipse
Edison
  brand of
  catalogs of
  films of
  Manufacturing Company
  marketing and publicity by
  patents of
  press screening by
  rivalry by
  see also Vitascope
Edison: The Invention of the Movies
Edison, Thomas A.
  and chronophotography
  and education
  Kinetograph of
  Kinetoscope of
  phonograph of
  Projectoscope of
  Vitascope of
editing

by exhibitors
correction and restoration of
development of
principle of
education
in Americanism
catalogs
films for
visual
Edwards, Margaret
effects
film to life
hybrid
filmic conventions in
motoring
technical difficulties of
Eggeling, Viking
Eidoloscope
Eisenstein, Sergei
Eldorado theater, Paris
electricity, as an environment
Électrophone
Ellis, Maisie
Elsaesser, Thomas
L'empreinte, ou La main rouge
Enchanted Gorilla Den
L'enlèvement des Sabines
enunciation (*énonciation*)
epistemes
cinematic
in film history
epistemology, and film history
Epstein, Jean
eroticism, and peep media

The Escaped Lunatic
Esoofally, Abdully
Essanay Film Company
Ethel's Luncheon
Europe, fairground cinema in
The European Rest Cure
The Execution of Mary Queen of Scots
exhibition
  context of
  digital
  mode of
  of restored early films
Exotic Europe project
explainers
The Eye of Conscience
EYE Film Instituut Nederland
La fable cinématographique
Fabritius, Carel
Fairbanks, Douglas
fairground cinema
  European
fairgrounds
fairy-play *see féerie*
Falardeau, Pierre
False Colours
Famous Players
fans
Farina
Fast Mail, Northern Pacific Railroad
féerie
  definition of
  stage spectacle of
festivals

the policy of
fétes foraines
Feuillade, Louis
film
as art
awareness
being
challenging primacy and status of
concepts of
creators
depository
as *dispositif*
exhibition, contexts of
hiring of
history
and epistemology
turn-of-the-century epistemes in
laboratories
lecturers
demise of
history of
politics of
semiology of
narrative
as original
as performance
performance, as acting
pioneers of
posters, evolution of
programs
projection *see* projection
publications *see* publications
rental exchanges
series
protagonist characters in

spectatorship *see* spectators
as state of the art
stock
9.5 mm
16 mm
17.5 mm
28 mm
35 mm
68 mm
black and white
nitrate-based
physical characteristics of
polyester
safety
triacetate
synopses
theory
of archival practice
crisis of
and early cinema
Film d'Art
Film d'Arte Italiana
Film Reports
Filmarchiv Josef Joye
filmgoing
habitus of
films
3D
abstract
actuality
as art
chase
comedy
d'art
duration of

early
    in the age of content
    digital exhibition of
    digital restoration of
    discourse of art in
    restoration and exhibition of
educational
    promotion of
    spectators of
erotic
feature
fiction
first advertising of
gallery
hybrid (fiction/non-fiction)
Impressionist
local
magic
marketed by length
modular form of
moral
multiple terms for
multiple-reel
narrative
news
non-fiction
as non-verbal communication
one-reel
outdoor
polychrome
in prisons
pure
quality
    decline of
    national heritage and reform in
religious

ride
and deixis of the image
stencil
talking during
three-reel
topical
train
transitional
travel
trick
two-reel
see also motion pictures; movies; moving pictures
Finsbury Technical College
The Firebug
Fischinger, Oskar
Flaherty, Robert
flicker
Floury, Edmond
The Fly Pest
Folies-Bergère
Fossati, Giovanna
Foucault, Michel
France
Belle Époque, modernization of arts in
effect on USA
series and serial production in
Françoise de Remini
Fregoli, Leopoldo
Freud, Sigmund
fringing
Froissart, Georges
From the Bottom of the Sea
Fuhrmann, August
Fuller, Loïe

Fuller-Seeley, Kathryn H.
Fun on the Farm
Les Funambules
Gaines, Jane M.
Gance, Abel
Garncarz, Joseph
Gaudreault, André
Gaumont
Gaumont, Léon
Gauntier, Gene
  Feature Players
Gazzera, Abbé
Gem Airdome, Point Pleasant
General Film Company
  branded posters of
  Educational Catalogue
  rivalries within
George Eastman House (GEH)
Georges Méliès: First Wizard of Cinema (1896–1913)
Germantown, Philadelphia
Germantown Theatre
Germany
  censorship in
gestures, figurative
Get Rich Quick
Ginisty, Paul
Gioacchino Murat
Gish, Lillian
Glas-Stereogramm-Salon
glass, and magic
Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei
Globe Theatre, Philadelphia
Goldin, Horace

Gomery, Douglas
La Gosseline
Gouget, Henri
Grand Biorama
Grand Café, Paris
Grand Central Palace, New York
Grandiscope
Grandville, Jean-Jacques
The Great Train Robbery
Great War-Graph Exhibition (L. H. Howes)
Green, George
Grierson, John
Grieveson, Lee
Griffith, D. W.
  at Biograph
  at Eagle
  at Meffert Company
  films of
  pseudonyms of
  in *Winchester*
Griffiths, Alison
Guitry, Sacha
Gunning, Tom
Haghefilm laboratories
Hale’s Tours
Hall, Donald
Handbill
Hannaway, Joe
Hansen, Miriam
Harrison, Louis Reeves
Hart, William S.
Hearst, William Randolf
Hearst-Selig News Pictorial

Heise, William
Hennegan, stock text posters by
Hepworth, Cecil
heralds
  stock
Hidalgo, Santiago
Higashi, Sumiko
The Highlanders' Defiance
historiography
  revisionist
histrionic code
Hoffman, Richard L.
  handwritten database of
Hogarth, William
Hodkinson, W. W.
Hollywood
  advertising posters
  toward classic posters of
Holmes, Burton
home theater
  creation of
Hopwood, Henry V.
How Cissy Made Good
Howe, Lyman H.
  advertising by
Huff, Theodore
Hughes Photo-Rotoscope
Hughes, W. C.
Hugo, Victor
Huhtamo, Erkki
Hulfish, David S.
Humphreys, William
Huygens, Christiaan

hybridization
  alteration format
Hypocrites
ideology, cultural
image, synchronization with sound
imagination, prisoners' world of
IMAX
immersion
  heteropathic
  idiopathic
IMP studio
  "Girl" *see also* Lawrence, Florence
impersonation
In the Land of the Head-Hunters
Ince, Thomas H.
index, as trace of pastness
industrialization, aesthetic consequences of
L'Inferno
instability
installations
  contemporary
  of early cinema
International Electrical Exhibition, Paris
International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF)
  Brighton conference of
  Treasures from the Film Archives database
internet
  archive access via
  database on
  as peep medium
Internet Archive
intertitles
  colored

objects as
The Invaders
inventor-entrepreneurs
The Invisible Girl
Irish Mail
Itala
Italy
effect on USA
and film art
Iunk, Pierre
Ives, Charlotte
Jacobs, Lea
The Jail-Bird; Or the Bishop and the Convict
Janis, Elsie
Je vais chercher du pain
Jenkins, C. Francis
Johnson, Agnes Christine
The Joining of the Oceans – The Panama Canal
Joliet prison
Jost, François
journals
changes in titles and headings
linguistic features of articles
see also films, trade journals of
juggling, and conjuring
Julius Caesar
Kaiser-Panorama
Kalem
"Girl"
stock company
Katorza brothers
Kay-Bee
Keaton, Buster

Keil, Charlie
Keith vaudeville houses
Kerf, Christine
Kessler, Frank
Keystone
Kinemacolor
kinematograph
  legal proceedings in
  mechanics and mechanism of
  pathogenic qualities of
  theatrical application of
  trade journals of
Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly
kinematography
  industrial conception of
  and scene changes
Kinetic Lantern
Kinetograph
Kinetophone
Kinetoscope
  coin-operated
  commercial exploitation of
  documentaries on
  of Edison
  erotic
  flip-card
  lynching on
  peephole
  superseded by Vitascope
King, Rob
Kinodrome
Kinora
Kircher, Athanasius
Kleine, George

Kliegl brothers
Knickerbocker, New York
Kodak Eastmancolor triacetate film
Koster & Bial’s Music Hall
Koszarski, Richard
Kremer, Theodore
Krows, Arthur Edwin
The Lab at Belmar, Lakewood
laboratories, concepts of
Lacasse, Germain
Lady Letmere’s Jewellery
Laemmle, Carl
Lagny, Michèle
The Lamb
lamps
  hand-held
  oil
  triode (three-electrode)
Lane, Chris
Langenheim, Frederick
Langenheim, William
lantern slides
  colored
  in prison
lanterns, types of
Latham family
Lauder, Harry
Lawrence, Florence
Le Forestier, Laurent
Le Giornate del Cinema Muto
Le Sélect
lecturers *see* film, lecturers
Léger, Fernand

Legrand, Paul
Lester, Louise
Levedan, Henri
L'Herbier, Marcel
Library of Congress
  Paper Print Collection
Ligensa, Annemone
Linder, Max
The Lion and the Mouse
lithographs
  film-specific
The Little Reb
The Lonedale Operator
Loos, Anita
Love's Stratagem
Loyd, William
Lubin
  player photographs
  press releases
Lubin, Siegmund
Lubin Theater
Lumière
  brothers
  Cinématographe
  films of
  program format of
  in the UK
Lumière, Antoine
Lumière, Auguste
Lumière, Louis
Luxembourg
lynching
McGuffins

Machin, Alfred
machine plays
McWade, Edward
Maden, J. F.
Maggi, Luigi
magic
  and cinema
  and glass
  and mirrors
magic lantern
  see also lantern slides
Mahagonny
Majestic
Mallet, Félicia
Manovich, Lev
manufacturers
  American
  British
  catalogs of
  European
  of *féeries*
  films presented by
  production logs of
  publicity by
Marey, Étienne-Jules
Marinovitch
Marion, Philippe
marketing
  barkers
  mass
Marquand, Rube
Marsh, Mae
Martin, Glenn
Martinez, Ariane

Martoglio, Nino
Marvin, Henry
masculinity, reformation of
Maskelyne, John Nevil
mass culture
Matuszewski, Bolesław
Maudite soit la guerre
Maurice, Clément
Maurice, Joseph
May, Margaret
media
  audiovisual
  computer
  context
  convergence of
  coverage
  culture
  digital
  dissemination
  emerging
  forms
  history
  hybrid
  identity
  institution
  listening
  machines
  mass
  multiple
  networks
  new
  news
  and orality
  peep
  producers

screen
sensationalism
texts
theory
visual
Meffert Stock Company
Méliès, Georges
appearances by
and color
DVD releases
féerie of
films of
in 3D
trick
“Kinematographic Views”
melodrama
Méry, Jean
Messter, Oskar
metteur en scène
Milano Films
Miles brothers
A Million Bid
mimetic diegesis
mimetic transference
mirrors
and magic
Les Misérables
Mistinguett
Mitchell & Kenyon
Mitry, Jean
mobs
Modern Times
modernity
Monopolfilm

monstration
Moore, Paul. S.
moral reform
Morris, Flora
Morrison, Bill
Morrison, Rosabel
Motion Picture Distributing and Sales Company (MPDSC)
Motion Picture News
Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC)
Motion Picture Sales Company
motion pictures
  in churches
  color and Pathé-Frères
  corrupting effect of
  educational
  and live performance
  in permanent venues
  in prison
  traveling shows
  and variety shows
  see also films
motography
Motography
Mount Pleasant Female Prison
movement, inner and outer
movies
  commuting to
  going to the
  home
  length of
  in prison
  see also films
moving images
Moving Picture World

section title changes in
moving pictures
advertising of
composition of
culture of
early
editing of
educational value of
impact of
literary basis for
locations for
naturalistic
perception of
in prison
tricks in
type of patron
see also films
Mullens, Albert
Mullens, Willy
Musée Grévin, Paris
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA),New York
Museum of the Moving Image
Mushroom Culture
music
integrated
and pantomime
supplied by cable
music halls
Musolaphone
Musser, Charles
Mutoscope
Mutual Film Corp.
Mutual Welfare League (MWL)
The Mystery of Edwin Drood

Nanook of the North
Napierkowska, Stasia
Napoleon
Napoleon and the English Sailor
narrative
  and attraction
  devices of
  énoncé
  extrinsic and intrinsic
  levels of
  minimum sequence
  and spectacle
National Board of Censorship
National Film Archive, London
National Film Preservation Foundation
National Film and Sound Archive of Australia
National Film and Television Archive (NFA)
National Independent Moving Picture Alliance (NIMPA)
nationalism
Nederlands Filmmuseum
Nerone
neurasthenia (modern nervousness)
New Life Motion Pictures
New York
  news syndicates of
  prisons in
  theaters in
New York Board of Censorship
New York Motion Picture Company
newspapers, use in publicity
newsreels
Nicholson, Dorothy
Nick Carter: King of Detectives

nickelodeons
  exterior decoration of
  on-site advertising by
  period of
  poster practices of
  programs in
Niver, Kemp
Normand, Mabel
novels, descriptions of Théâtrophone in
Noverre, Maurice
nudism
O’Brien, Charles
Ober, George
O’Connor, Daniel
Odeon, Tomkinsville
Odin, Roger
Offenbach, Jacques
An Official Appointment
Olcott, Sydney
Oliver Twist
Olsen, Ole
Olsson, Jan
optical diagonal machine
optical instruments
optical toys
optics
  cultural
Oracle of Delphi
oral cinema
oral film practices
orality
Orange Vallée
Orpheum, Germantown

Osborne, Thomas Mott
Otis, Elita Proctor
Ottolenghi, Camillo
Ouida (Marie Louise de la Ramée)
Outdoor Theatre
Outerborough
Pagnol, Marcel
Palais Royal, Paris
Paley & Steiner
Panoptikon
Panorama
pantograph
pantomime
  and cinema
  classical
  modern
    and pure cinema
Pantoptikon
para-cinema
Paramount
Paramount Pictures Corporation
parastatic microscope
Paris Opéra
Parsons, Louella
Pastrone, Giovanni
The Patchwork Girl of Oz
Pathé
  advertising by
  color production statistics
  commitment to stencil color
  fairground trade of
  industrial infrastructure of
  naming of actors by

Pathé, Charles
Pathé Kok
Pathé-Frères, and motion picture color
Pathé-Journal
Pathécolor
Pathéscope
Paul, Robert W.
Pawlowski, Gaston de
Pearson, Roberta E.
peep boxes
  domestic
peep media
  incubation era of
  in private
  to mediated voyeurism
peep practice
  history of
  and screen practice
peep shows
peeping, public
Pennsylvania State Board of Censors
Pepper, John Henry
Pepper’s Ghost
performance
  multimedia
  non-histrionic
  restoration of
performers
  advertising of
  autobiographical knowledge of
  from legitimate stage
  as trademarks
  variety
periodization

Perrault, Pierre
Personal
perspective boxes
Peters, George
Peterson, Jennifer
Petit, Georges
Phalke, D. G.
Phantasmagoria
phantom rides
Phantoscope
  Slot-Action Cabinet
Phenakistiscope
Philadelphia, downtown
philosophical toys
Phono-cinéma-théâtre
phonographs
  automatic
Phonotéléphote
photographer
photographs
  of actors
  analog
photography
  animated
photoplay
  writing craze
Photoplay
Pickford, Mary
pictorialism
  as cinematic mise en scène
picture personalities
  photographs of
  prehistory of

Picture Progress
picture theater, development of, *see also* cinemas
The Pictures
pièces à machines (machine plays)
Le pied de mouton
A Pillow Fight
piracy
Pirandello, Luigi
The Pirate Ship
Pisano, Giusy
players *see* actors
Polanecky, Alois
pornography
Porta, Giambattista della
Porter, Edwin S.
posters
  bespoke cases for
  branded
  classic Hollywood
  film-specific
  improvement of
  nickelodeon
  Posteritis (The Poster Bug)
  recycled theatrical
  text
  wildcat displays of
Praxinoscope
pre-cinema
  and magic illusions
preservation
  context of
prestidigitation
The Prince and the Pauper
prisons

chapels as exhibition space in
female inmates of
filming in
and films
separate chapel system in
Privas, Xavier
producers
advertising by
anonymity of
British
digital
direct selling by
European
independent
licensed
media
release dates of
series production by
production
outsourcing of
serial
programming
programs
alternation hybrids
constant refreshing of
definition of
early
fairground
of feature-length films
multiple-reel
in nickelodeons
non-theatrical
of novelty era
organization strategies of
in permanent-venues

in prisons
rise of fiction in
for traveling shows
twice-weekly change in
in variety theaters
projection
Projectoscope
props
narrative functions of
Proteus, or We are Here and Not Here
proto-cinema
pseudonyms, use of
public opinion, critical reportage of
public relations
publicity
about actors
advance newspaper
picture personality
storefront posters
publics
definition of
generation of
Pulitzer, Joseph
Puskás, Tivadar
Les Pyrénées pittoresques
Les quatre cents coups du diable
Quo Vadis?
racing machines
racism
radio
precursors of
telephone
Radio Corporation of America (RCA)
Raff & Gammon

A Railroad Wooing
A Railway Tragedy
Rancière, Jacques
Ray, Nicholas
readers
reality
  capturing of
  illusion of
reception studies
recognition devices
records, self-creating
Reel Life
reflexivity, of film medium
regulation
  mode of
religion, and entertainment
remediation
Remords
Renoir, Jean
rensageki (chain drama)
representative regime
restoration
  color
  digital
  hybrid
Revenge
reviews
  in trade journals
Reynaud, Émile
Rialto, Germantown
Rialto, New York
Richardson, F. H.
Richter, Hans

Rifle Bill
Rip Van Winkle
Robert-Houdin, Jean-Eugène
Robertson, D. W.
Robida, Albert
rolling palaces
Roméo et Juliette
Rossel, Deac
Rothapfel, S. L. “Roxy”
La Roue
Rough Sea at Dover
Royal Garden Open Air, Stapleton
Rubenstein, Ida
Russia
Ruttmann, Walter
Sadoul, Georges
SAFFI-Camerio
Sales Company
Salomé
Savoy Theatre, New York
Le scarabée d’or
scenario
  importance of
  submissions of
  writers
scene changes, and kinematography
scenery, filmed
scenes
  shot in series
  types of
scènes à trucs (trick films)
scènes de féeries (fairy tales)
scènes de plein air (outdoor films)

scènes de vulgarization scientifique(educational films)
scènes dramatiques (dramatic films)
schools
  as exhibition spaces
Sckramson, C.
Scot, Reginald
Screen Club
screen practice
  and peep practice
screening
  animated
  archival
  color
  conditions of
  demand for
  and distribution
  educational
  as installation
  itinerant
  with lecture/commentary
  location-based
  and mob emulation
  modular
  new methods of
  open-air
  for press
  in prisons
  public
  schedules
  special
  of varied programs
  in variety shows
screens
  cathode-ray
  computer

digital
féeries on
ground-glass
hanging
images on
and magic
masking scene changes
and music
and pantomime
placement of
split
television
used in hybrid shows
voices and
wide
Scripture, Edward Wheeler
Sears Roebuck
Seeley, Blossom
selective tradition
Selig
advertising by
catalog of
films of
logo of
Selig, William N.
Sennett, Mack
sensationalism
concept and phenomenon of
and early cinema
explanations of
sensual perception
series
production in France
protagonists

Serner, Walter
Séverin
sexual behavior
  in prisons
sexual material
sexual repression
sexual tension
sexuality, suggestive
Shail, Andrew
Shakespeare, William, film adaptations of
Shepherd, Archie
shifters
shots
  credit
  linking of
  medium–long
  narrative
  single and multiple
  tableau
  tracking
show printers, offers by
showmen
  advertising by
  peep
  traveling
signs, language of
silent arts
Silent Films
silent films
  cycles of
  disappearance of
  music during
Sim, George
Simondon, Gilbert

simulation
Sing Sing prison
  cinemagoing at
  execution witnesses in
Singer, Ben
Sixth Art, birth of
Skladanowsky brothers
Skladanowsky, Emile
Skladanowsky, Max
Smith, Albert E.
Smith, Charles M.
Smith, George Albert
Smith, Gladys *see* Pickford, Mary
Smith, Harry
Snow, Michael
social engagement
socialist worker cinemas
Société d’encouragement pour l’industrie nationale, Paris
Société Générale des Téléphones
Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE)
Les soeurs ennemies
Solomon, Matthew
songs, illustrated
Sortie d’usine
sound
  integrated
  synchronization with image
  technology of
Spears, John R.
special effects
spectacle
  and narrative
spectators

affected by advertising
audiovisual
and educational films
first-time
in prison
response styles of
Le spectre rouge
speech
recorded
triumph over
Sphinx
splices
Spooner, Cecil
Spoor, George
stability
stage magic, in late nineteenth century
stage pictorialism
Staiger, Janet
Stanley, Philadelphia
Star of Hope
star system
Star Theatre, Herkimer
Star Theatre, New Brighton
stencil color
early
Pathé’s commitment to
stereopticon
stereoscomania
stereoscope
cabinet
Cosmoramic
domestic
stereoscopy
Sterling, Ford

Sterne, Elaine
Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin
stills, front of house
The Story the Biograph Told
Street Cinematograph
Streible, Dan
stretching
stroboscope
The Suffragette Pitcher
A Summer Idyll
Sweet, Blanche
Swinburne, Algernon Charles
tableaux
Tally, Thomas L.
Talmadge, Norma
Taylor, Stanner E. V.
technicians
Technicolor
  Process Two
technology
  a-human
  digital
  state-of-the-art
Tel-musici and Magnaphone
Telectrophone
Telefon Hírmondó
telegraph
  advance publicity by
telephone
  social and artistic uses of
Telephone Herald
téléphonoscope
telephony, wireless

television
Tellevent (Televant)
Thanhouser Company
Theater Network Television (TNT)
theater troupes, advertising by
Theater TV
theaters
  in New York
  storefront advertising for
  triplex
  urban
Théâtre optique
Théâtre Robert-Houdin
Theatrograph
Théâtrophone
  Société du
Thomas, A. D.
Thompson, Kristin
Thuillier, Elisabeth
Thurston, Howard
tints, film
Title Poster Company
title-objects
Tobin, Thomas
Tonbilder
Toulmin, Vanessa
Toulouse, Edouard
town halls
Traber, Zacharias
Tracked by Bloodhounds; Or a Lynching at Cripple Creek
trade journals
Trådgårdsmåstaren (*The Broken Spring Rose*)
transport, and traveling cinema

travel, in moving images
Trewey, Félicien
Triangle Film Corporation
Trier University
Troncone brothers
Turner, Florence
Turpain, Albert
Twisted Trail
United Kingdom
  invention of cinematic celebrity in
United Press
United States (USA)
  and cinematic celebrity
  effect of imported films on
  film publications in
Universal
  films of
Urban, Charles
Urban-Eclipse
Uricchio, William
ushers
Vaisse, Léon
van Hoogstraten, Samuel
The Vanderbilt Cup
Varieté
variety theaters
  programs in
vaudeville
  family theaters
venues, film-only
Vénus victrix
Verhoeff, Nanna
Verne, Jules

Victoria Theatre, Philadelphia
vigilantism, unscripted
Villiers de l’Isle Adam
violence, racialized
virtual images, appearance and disappearance of
visual language
visual primacy
visualization
  principles of
Vitagraph
  “Girl”
  original posters of
  Quality Films of
Vitagraph Theatre, Broadway
Vitascope
  newspaper publicity for
voice, natural
Vorse, Mary Heaton
voyeurism, mediated
vues d’optique
Wade, John
Wague, Georges
  on stage
Walls, Howard Lamarr
Waltz, Gwendolyn
Walton, Lester
Ward, Fanny
Warner Features
Washington under the American Flag
Washington under the British Flag
The Watermelon Patch
Waters, Percival
We Can’t Go Home Again

Weber, Lois
Wells, N. E.
Wertheimer, Max
West, A. J.
Western Union
What the Moon Saw
Wheel of Life
When Extremes Meet
The White Caps
White, Pearl
Williams, Randall
Williams, Tami
Williamson, James
Williamson Kinematograph Company
Winchester
wordlessness, concepts of
World War I
  motion picture color before
World’s Fair, Paris
writers, anonymity of
Wyanoak Publishing Company
Yacco, Sada
YouTube
Zahn, Johann
Zecca, Ferdinand
Zink, Adolf
Zoetrope
zograscope
Zoomscape
Zukor, Adolph
Zumthor, Paul